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Fostering a Performance Culture in Zimbabwean State-Owned Enterprises:
Evidence from ZINARA

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Abstract

This study examines how Zimbabwe National Roads Administration (ZINARA) can improve its performance by investigating its organizational culture, leadership styles, and communication practices. Using stratified random sampling, a sample of 76 employees of ZINARA were interviewed with data analysed in SPSS (descriptive reliability at $\alpha = 0.724$) The research identifies crucial factors that influence performance, emphasizing a prevalent favorable organizational culture promoting high performance, accountability, and teamwork. Despite the dominance of autocratic leadership, effective communication is highlighted as a key factor shaping organizational dynamics, contributing to a positive work environment. The findings stress the alignment between ZINARA's values and employee behavior. Reviewing existing literature, the study addresses a research gap specific to Zimbabwe, providing insights into the unique challenges faced by state-owned enterprises in a developing country. Practical recommendations include advocating for leadership development programs in Zimbabwean state-owned enterprises, focusing on communication and strategic planning. The study proposes a comprehensive framework that integrates communication, leadership, processes, evaluation, and empowerment to enhance organizational performance.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Autocratic Leadership, Effective Communication, Conducive Work Environment, Framework for Organizational Performance.

Introduction and Background

State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) play a significant role in national economies, providing public services, driving infrastructure development and fostering economic growth (World Bank, 2021). Globally, they have been seen as instruments for achieving strategic government objectives, promoting economic progress, ensuring crucial service provision and encouraging innovation (World Health Organisation, 2022). However, their operations and governance have faced increased scrutiny from scholars like Matshiliza, (2017) and Mohr & Wagner (2013), with research highlighting issues of inefficiency, transparency, and corruption. This has led to calls for improved accountability, transparency and corporate governance. International institutions also express concerns regarding potential risks and market distortions, emphasizing the need for fair competition and adherence to market principles.

State-Owned Enterprises in Africa fulfil diverse and essential roles, shaped by the continent's distinct economic conditions and developmental challenges (Chimbari, 2017). They drive key sectors such as energy in South Africa and telecommunications in Kenya and help bridge infrastructure gaps, expand access to basic services, and support nation-building. Their functions are further influenced by regional factors like natural resource endowments, geopolitical contexts, and historical legacies. In Zimbabwe, SOEs have played a significant part in expanding infrastructure and service delivery, yet they face persistent issues related to inefficiency, accountability, and underperformance (Muswere, Dube, & Others, 2022). This underscores the need for context-specific analysis and reforms tailored to Zimbabwe's unique socioeconomic landscape.

Scholars highlight the crucial role of organizational culture in operational success (Ngwenya, 2019), its influence on leadership (Musanzikwa & Ramchander, 2018), work engagement trends (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018), and frameworks linking leadership and culture to performance (Mishra, et al 2014). Concurrently, Muswere et al. (2022) stress the importance of effective state-owned enterprises (SOEs) for economic development. Global debates on SOE reform remain polarized: some advocate comprehensive reforms focusing on transparency, accountability, and performance (Matsiliza, 2017), while others support targeted interventions for struggling entities. These discussions underscore the tension between immediate fixes and systemic change. Beyond academic and policy relevance, this study addresses tangible challenges affecting Zimbabwean citizens, such as inefficient transportation, energy shortages, and poor infrastructure which diminish quality of life and hinder development. By examining these issues, the research aims to provide actionable insights for policymakers, industries and society to address governance, SOE performance and sustainable development in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe's SOEs operate in a challenging environment characterized by inefficiencies, mismanagement, and weak accountability, further strained by economic crises and governance shortcomings (World Bank, 2019; Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2021). These SOEs face severe operational and service delivery challenges, such as deteriorating infrastructure, inefficient waste management, and chronic underperformance, as documented by The Auditor-General (2021). These issues not only reflect systemic inefficiencies but also directly hinder national progress toward Zimbabwe's Vision 2030, which aims to transform the country into a middle-income

economy (Chitiyo, Dengu, Mbae, & Vandome, 2019). A key underlying factor is the absence of a robust, performance-oriented organizational culture, comprising shared values, norms, and practices that drive accountability, efficiency, and strategic alignment (Kim & Chang, 2018). Despite broad recognition of the role organizational culture plays in performance, Zimbabwean SOEs like ZINARA struggle to cultivate such a culture, exacerbating inefficiencies and governance deficits (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2021; Muswere et al., 2022). This gap is compounded by a lack of context-specific frameworks for fostering performance cultures within Zimbabwe's SOEs, particularly through integrated approaches involving leadership, engagement, communication, and performance management (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Mishra et al., 2014).

Focusing on the Zimbabwe National Roads Administration (ZINARA), this study highlights sector-specific challenges such as road maintenance, toll collection, and infrastructure development (Muchadenyika, 2018). The underperformance of SOEs like ZINARA has broad societal and economic repercussions, limiting investment, employment and developmental progress (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). A critical factor in addressing these challenges is organizational culture. While the relationship between organizational culture and performance is well-documented (Kim & Chang, 2018), there remains a gap in contextualized frameworks for fostering performance cultures within Zimbabwean SOEs. This study aims to address this by examining leadership, engagement, communication, and performance management practices, using ZINARA as a case study. The goal is to propose actionable strategies for cultural transformation that enhance operational efficiency, service delivery, and sustainable development.

Literature Review

This literature review synthesizes perspectives on the interplay between organizational culture, leadership, communication, and performance management, highlighting the significant challenges faced by Zimbabwean SOEs and their broader economic and political implications. Three core theories underpin this research. Organizational Culture Theory (Schein, 2010), emphasizes the role of shared beliefs, values, and assumptions in shaping behavior and performance, though its practical application can be complex (Cameron, Quinn, DeGraff, & Thakor, 2022). Employee Engagement Theory (Kahn, 1990), focuses on the psychological investment of employees in their work and the conditions that foster motivation and commitment. Lastly, the Communication Theory (Rogers, Singhal, & Quinlan, 2014), addresses the diffusion of

innovations and the role of formal and informal channels and opinion leaders in disseminating information and shaping cultural norms. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the cultural deficiencies in Zimbabwean SOEs, aiming to inform practical interventions and policy recommendations that promote sustainable development and organizational effectiveness.

Empirical research consistently underscores the profound significance of leadership in shaping the culture and performance SOEs. Studies such as that by Badarai et al. (2023) highlight the detrimental consequences of ineffective leadership, particularly bureaucratic and authoritarian styles, which often stifle innovation and hinder organizational success. Their research reveals that transformational leadership not only directly enhances performance but also operates through mediating factors like soft proactive influence tactics and high-quality leader-follower relationships, collectively accounting for 47% of variability in organizational outcomes.

Within the Zimbabwean context, leadership deficiencies are further exacerbated by patronage-based appointments, where political loyalty trumps merit, leading to a decline in governance and operational efficacy (Maibvisira & Tefera, 2022). This aligns with broader findings that democratic and adaptable leadership styles are critical for fostering competitiveness and sustainable performance (Akpapere et al., 2019; Al Khajeh, 2018). Moreover, transformational and ethical leadership models are empirically linked to the cultivation of performance-oriented cultures, as they inspire employee engagement, ownership, and innovation, essential elements for meaningful public sector reform (Effelsberg et al., 2014; Knies et al., 2016; Cameron & Quinn, 2021). To address these challenges, scholars emphasize the need for targeted leadership development initiatives. Sunita (2022) advocate for continuous training and flexible leadership approaches that can harmonize organizational values with strategic goals, ensuring SOEs are equipped to navigate complex socioeconomic landscapes and drive sustainable development.

Schein's model of organizational culture, as analyzed by Cameron et al. (2022), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding its multilayered nature, distinguishing between surface-level artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. However, despite its theoretical robustness, practical application remains challenging. Notably, Gasela's (2022) research presents a counterpoint, finding no significant impact of organizational culture on

performance in the context of strategy implementation within public entities. This is attributed to a culture misaligned with strategic goals and further hampered by limited financial and human resources. In contrast, Marampa et al. (2019) affirm the vital role of organizational culture, emphasizing that it enhances performance by fostering the dedication and involvement of every individual within the organization. Schimmoeller (2010) contributes a crucial perspective, advocating for the integration of organizational culture with both strategy and the external environment. This alignment is essential to ensure the culture remains internally coherent and adaptable to changing external conditions. Collectively, these studies underscore that while a performance-oriented culture is foundational to organizational effectiveness, requiring collective commitment and strategic alignment its successful cultivation in SOEs is often hindered by practical implementation challenges and resource constraints.

Employee engagement is a critical determinant of performance in SOEs, with empirical studies underscoring its profound impact on both individual and organizational outcomes. Bakker and Albrecht (2018) establish a definitive correlation between engagement and enhancements in innovation, dedication, and overall performance. Their work emphasizes the need for organizational support to foster a positive psychological state among employees, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Muller et al. (2018) further reinforce this link, demonstrating a notable positive correlation between engagement and organizational performance when measured using frameworks like the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), which evaluates financial, customer, internal process, and learning metrics.

Guest (2014) expands on the mutual nature of engagement, arguing that it benefits both the organization and the individual, leading to heightened dedication and conscientiousness. Furst (2018) adds that high engagement levels correlate with improved customer satisfaction, productivity, operational efficiency, profitability, and employee well-being, while reducing absenteeism and turnover. Akiniyi and Adebakin (2021) broaden the theoretical scope by incorporating social aspects such as autonomy, ownership, and development opportunities, highlighting their role in fostering engagement. However, Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes, and Delbridge (2019) notes a significant gap in research on engagement within the public sector, limiting its practical understanding and application.

In the African context, scholars like Amah (2018) affirm that engaged employees exhibit higher productivity, job satisfaction, and commitment. Donkor, Dongmei, and Sekyere (2021) stress the role of leadership, through clear communication, empowerment, and recognition, in creating an engaging work environment within SOEs. Similarly, Savo, Rusike, and Sena (2024) link engagement to tangible outcomes such as operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and financial performance, reinforcing the business case for prioritizing engagement in SOEs.

Within Zimbabwean SOEs, challenges related to employee motivation and performance persist. Addressing these requires a focus on autonomy, belonging, and development opportunities to enhance engagement. By doing so, SOEs can achieve improved business results and contribute to organizational success, aligning with the broader empirical evidence that underscores engagement as a key driver of performance in public sector enterprises (Muswere et al. 2022)

Effective communication is a cornerstone of organizational culture, employee engagement, and performance within SOEs. Studies such as those by Musheke and Phiri (2021) confirm that communication effectiveness is shaped by management styles and workplace conflicts, with a clear positive correlation between well-chosen communication channels and organizational performance. Hussain (2020) further emphasizes that while efficient communication enhances performance, its benefits can be undermined by an unsupportive organizational culture, underscoring the need to cultivate environments that prioritize transparency and open dialogue. In globalized contexts, Woods (2016) highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptive digital tools, such as social media, for navigating cross-cultural complexities and promoting organizational ambidexterity. Additional research by Haroon (2018) and Mulya et al. (2022) reinforces the strong link between organizational communication and performance, noting its positive impact on employee motivation and operational efficiency. During crises, transparent communication becomes particularly vital; Muswere et al. (2022) stress its role in building stakeholder trust and organizational resilience. Ismawaty and Si (2023) further validate that empowering employees through communication ownership significantly enhances performance, illustrating the profound influence of communicative practices on overall organizational success.

Similarly, well-designed performance management systems (PMS) are crucial for aligning employee efforts with strategic objectives in SOEs. Awan et al. (2020) identify key components

of an effective PMS, including goal formulation, performance evaluation, information management, and development planning. Research by Wibisono et al. (2019) and Samwel (2018) establishes a strong correlation between PMS implementation and improvements in both employee and organizational performance, emphasizing the importance of inclusive practices such as staff participation, equitable monitoring, and recognition. Khan et al. (2021) note the statistically significant impact of PMS on employee performance and advocate for systems that are agile and transparent, capable of adapting to dynamic external conditions like economic fluctuations and policy changes. Mahfouz and Muhumed (2020) highlight agility and transparency as especially critical for public-sector SOEs, enabling responsiveness and accountability. Chiware, & Vyas-Doorgapersad (2021) underscore the role of transparency in performance evaluations, which fosters employee responsibility and professional growth. However, Chiparo et al. (2022) caution that performance planning alone is insufficient without continuous monitoring and evaluation, calling for robust mechanisms to ensure sustained effectiveness. For SOEs such as Zimbabwe's ZINARA, these insights collectively advocate for the adoption of flexible, transparent, and participatory performance management systems to drive alignment, enhance performance, and navigate complex socio-economic challenges.

Figure 1 below summarises the conceptual framework guiding this study as informed by the reviewed literature.

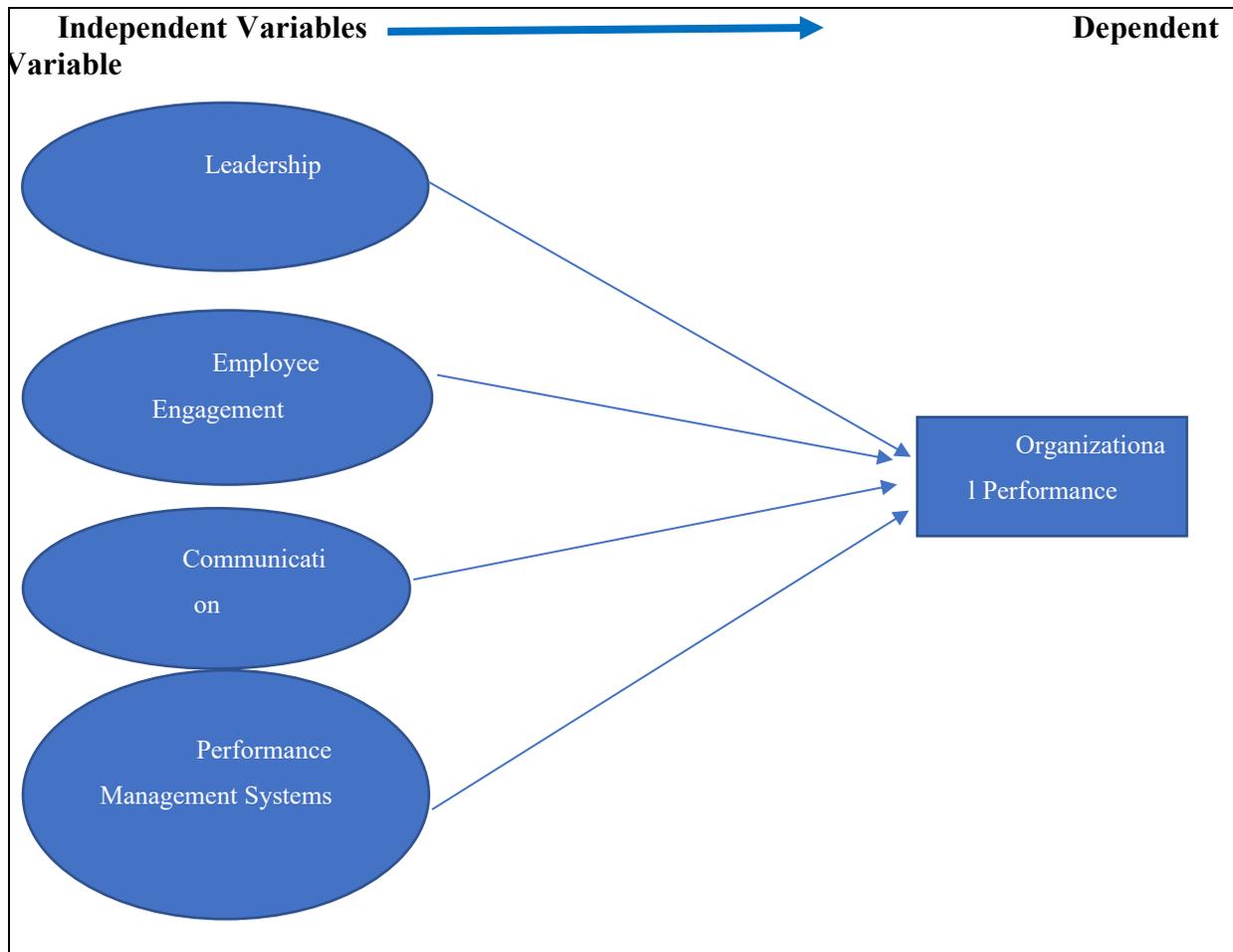


Figure 1 : Conceptual framework

Source: Researcher's Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

The study adopts a pragmatist philosophy (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, & Collins, 2009; Farjoun, Ansell, & Boin, 2015), emphasizing practical, real-world problem-solving over abstract theorization. This approach is particularly suited to ZINARA's context, where transformative change is urgently needed. Pragmatism enables the development of actionable strategies to foster a performance-oriented culture, aligning research outcomes with the practical challenges faced by Zimbabwe's SOEs. A quantitative approach forms the core of the research design, utilizing surveys and statistical analysis to gather numerical data on organizational culture, leadership, communication, employee engagement, and performance management (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This design allows for the collection of large-scale data from diverse sources, including surveys, performance metrics, and financial records. The quantitative approach facilitates the identification

of patterns, correlations, and trends, enabling benchmarking and measurement of progress over time. The study incorporates exploratory elements through its focus on ZINARA as a case study, providing depth and context to the numerical findings.

The research focuses on ZINARA, incorporating diverse stakeholders including policymakers, business leaders, financial experts, and the general public. A sample size of 80 respondents was determined using stratified random sampling (Memon et al., 2020) to ensure representation across different stakeholder groups. Simple random sampling techniques (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) were then applied within each stratum to guarantee representativeness and minimize bias. This approach ensures comprehensive perspectives on ZINARA's organizational culture while maintaining statistical reliability. Primary data collection emphasizes quantitative methods through structured, closed-ended questionnaires administered via Google Forms (See annexure 1 for the survey instrument) for efficiency and accessibility (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). The surveys were designed to gather specific, measurable responses about organizational culture dimensions. Qualitative insights were incorporated through open-ended questions that capture personal narratives and experiences. SPSS statistical software was employed for data processing and analysis, following established protocols for quantitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

A pilot study was conducted to refine research instruments and identify potential issues in the research design (Denscombe, 2017). This preliminary testing ensured question clarity, relevance, and appropriateness for the target respondents. The validation process included content validity checks through secondary data analysis (Yin, 2014) and reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure internal consistency (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Data collection followed ethical principles and practical considerations. Participants received two-week advance notice to ensure adequate preparation time (Reio Jr & Shuck, 2015). These measures safeguard the study's credibility and trustworthiness. Quantitative data analysis employs SPSS for statistical processing, following contemporary methodological standards. Google Forms facilitated efficient digital data collection while accommodating participants' schedules. The procedures emphasized respectful engagement and maintained a trust-based researcher-participant relationship throughout the process with full ethical considerations being made mainly the right to informed consent and the right to anonymity and the right to withdraw from the study at any point.

The analysis identified patterns, correlations, and trends in organizational culture factors, providing robust foundations for conclusions and recommendations. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enables comprehensive understanding of ZINARA's cultural challenges and opportunities.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Out of 80 distributed questionnaires, 76 were completed, yielding a 95% response rate, well above the 70% benchmark suggested by Mugenda and Mugenda (2012), reflecting both participant commitment and follow-up efforts. Reliability was confirmed using SPSS, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients above 0.7 across all components and an overall value of 0.724, indicating strong internal consistency (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012).

Demographic analysis showed that 64% of respondents were male and 36% female. In terms of age, 31.6% were 18–25 years, 30.3% were 26–35 years, 18.4% were 36–45 years, 17.1% were 46–54 years, and only 2.6% were above 55 years. Academically, 42.1% held a bachelor's degree, 22.4% a master's, and 19.7% a certificate, reflecting generally high education levels. Regarding occupations, 45.4% were in administrative roles, 27.6% in technical positions, 16.7% supervisory and 10.3% managerial, while no respondents were in support roles. Finally, experience levels revealed that 41.1% had served 1–5 years, 26.3% for 6–10 years, 17.1% for 11–15 years, 10.5% for 16–20 years and only 5.3% for over 20 years. These demographic insights contextualise the findings by highlighting variations in perspectives shaped by gender, age, education, occupation and tenure.

Current organizational culture within Zimbabwe National Roads Administration

From the questionnaire, the researcher inquired on the current organizational culture within ZINARA with results summarised in Table 1. The above results indicate that the current organizational culture within ZINARA has mixed levels of agreement among employees. The statement regarding the promotion of high performance received a mean rating of 3.63, suggesting a moderate level of agreement. Similarly, employees expressed a moderate level of agreement (mean = 3.64) regarding being encouraged to take ownership of their work.

Table 1: Current organizational culture within ZINARA

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organizational culture in ZINARA promotes high performance.	3.63	1.13
Employees in ZINARA are encouraged to take ownership of their work.	3.64	1.04
ZINARA values teamwork and collaboration among its employees.	3.78	1.20
There is a clear alignment between ZINARA's values and employees' behaviour.	3.91	0.82
ZINARA recognizes and rewards exceptional performance.	1.36	0.48

The value placed on teamwork and collaboration within ZINARA received a slightly higher mean rating of 3.78, indicating a slightly stronger level of agreement among employees. Furthermore, there seems to be a relatively stronger alignment between ZINARA's values and employees' behaviour, as indicated by a mean rating of 3.91. This suggests that employees perceive a clearer connection between the organization's values and their own behaviour.

However, the statement regarding the recognition and rewarding of exceptional performance received a significantly lower mean rating of 1.36, indicating a lack of agreement among employees. This suggests that employees feel that ZINARA does not effectively recognize and reward exceptional performance. The above results are supported by a study conducted by Cameron et al. (2022), who stated that organization culture is a valuable tool for comprehending the intricate performance of organizations. This, however, differs from Gasela's (2021) research, who found that there is no significant impact of organizational culture on organizational performance in the context of strategy implementation as the current organizational culture is not conducive to the successful execution of strategy, resulting in a detrimental impact on the performance of public entities.

Impact of leadership styles on cultivating a performance-oriented culture within ZINARA.

Table 2 presents the participants' rating of the various leadership styles.

Table 2: Impact of leadership styles

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Autocratic	4.28	1.00
Democratic	3.97	0.88
Laissez-faire	3.96	0.96
Transformational	3.80	0.91
Transactional	4.13	0.99

The results show that employees perceive that autocratic leadership is the most prevalent and impactful style at ZINARA, receiving the highest mean rating (4.28), which indicates a strong agreement that it significantly influences the performance-oriented culture. This suggests decision-making is highly centralized. Transactional leadership also showed a strong presence (mean=4.13), aligning with Sunita's (2022) findings on its focus on rewards and performance standards. Democratic (mean=3.97), laissez-faire (mean=3.96), and transformational (mean=3.8) styles were perceived to have a moderate impact. The moderate agreement on democratic and laissez-faire styles suggests some employee participation and autonomy exist, though not as prominently as top-down approaches. The support for transformational leadership's importance by Cameron and Quinn (2021) contrasts with its lower prevalence at ZINARA. The variability in responses (standard deviations 0.879-1.001) indicates some diversity in employee perceptions, but the overall results point to a dominant autocratic culture, which Akinniyi and Adebakin (2021) argue can be beneficial for performance, though it contrasts with more participatory ideals.

Role of communication in shaping a culture of performance and accountability

Table 3 summarises the results on the participants' views on the role of communication and accountability.

Table 3: Role of communication

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication channels within ZINARA are open and transparent.	4.13	0.99
Information flows freely between different levels of the organization in ZINARA.	3.78	1.12
ZINARA effectively communicates performance expectations to its employees.	4.25	0.95
Feedback and suggestions from employees are actively sought and valued in ZINARA.	4.21	0.66
ZINARA holds regular meetings and updates to keep employees informed about organizational performance.	4.28	1.00

The results indicate that communication significantly shapes a culture of performance and accountability at ZINARA. Employees strongly agreed that communication channels are open and transparent, receiving a mean rating of 4.13, a finding consistent with Hussain’s (2020) conclusion that transparent communication positively influences organizational performance. Similarly, employees reported strong clarity regarding performance expectations, reflected in a mean rating of 4.25 and felt their feedback was actively sought and valued, scoring 4.21. Regular updates and meetings also received strong agreement, with a mean of 4.28, reinforcing transparency and accountability. These observations align with Muswere and colleagues’ 2022 research on transparent communication in state-owned enterprises, which highlights its role in building trust, and support Ismawaty and SI’s 2023 finding that communicative ownership enhances employee accountability and performance. Although the flow of information across organizational levels showed moderate agreement, with a mean of 3.78, suggesting potential areas for improvement, the overall results underscore that open communication, clear expectations, active feedback mechanisms, and regular updates are crucial to fostering ZINARA’s performance-oriented culture.

Potential barriers to implementing a performance-driven culture in SOEs

Participants were asked to rate potential barrier is implementing a performance-driven culture in SOEs and the results are summarised Table 4 below.

Table 4: Potential barriers to implementing a performance-driven culture

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lack of clear performance metrics and targets	3.97	0.98
Inadequate training and development opportunities for employees	4.29	1.03
Resistance to change from employees and management	3.80	0.91
Poor communication and information sharing within the organization	4.13	0.99
Lack of accountability for performance outcomes	1.36	0.48

The results identify several significant barriers to implementing a performance-driven culture within State-Owned Enterprises. Employees strongly agreed that inadequate training and development opportunities are a major obstacle, receiving a mean rating of 4.29. Poor communication and information sharing was also perceived as a substantial barrier, with a mean rating of 4.13. There was moderate agreement that a lack of clear performance metrics and targets

presents a challenge, scoring 3.97, alongside resistance to change from both employees and management, which received a mean rating of 3.80. Conversely, employees strongly disagreed that a lack of accountability for performance outcomes is a problem, as evidenced by the very low mean rating of 1.36. This suggests that while employees recognize deficiencies in structural support like training and communication, they do not perceive a systemic absence of personal accountability for performance results.

Key components that will be included in a framework for fostering a performance culture within ZINARA

Respondents also rated the key components that will be included in a framework for fostering a performance culture within ZINARA as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Key components for the framework

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
(i) Clear and well-communicated organizational goals and objectives.	4.21	0.66
(ii) Leadership commitment and support to drive a culture of performance.	3.63	1.13
(iii) Performance management systems and processes for setting goals, providing feedback, and evaluating performance.	3.78	1.11
(iv) Transparent and fair performance evaluation and reward systems.	3.96	0.96
(v) Employee empowerment and involvement in decision-making processes.	3.97	0.98
(vi) Effective communication channels and practices throughout the organization	3.91	0.82

The key components that can be included in a framework for fostering a performance culture within Zimbabwe National Roads Administration (ZINARA) based on the provided mean ratings are as follows:

- (i) ***Clear and well-communicated organizational goals and objectives;*** This component received a relatively high mean rating of 4.21, indicating the importance of establishing clear goals and objectives that are effectively communicated to all employees. This helps

align everyone's efforts towards a common purpose and provides clarity on what needs to be achieved. This is supported by Hussain (2020) who concluded that efficient communication has a good influence on organizational performance promoting clarity, collaboration, and productivity among team members. Haroon (2018) also noted that effective communication fosters collaboration and teamwork within an organization. When team members can communicate their ideas, opinions, and concerns openly, it promotes a culture of collaboration and encourages diverse perspectives.

- (ii) ***Leadership commitment and support to drive a culture of performance;*** Although this component received a slightly lower mean rating of 3.63, it is still a crucial factor. Strong leadership commitment and support are necessary to drive and sustain a performance culture. Leaders should actively promote and reinforce performance expectations, provide guidance, and lead by example. This also agrees with Maibvisira and Tefera (2022) who found that effective leadership significantly influences organizational performance by inspiring and motivating employees, fostering a positive work environment, promoting innovation and creativity, facilitating effective communication and collaboration, and ensuring strategic goal alignment. Al Khajeh (2018) also highlighted the crucial role of leadership in driving organizational success and achieving high levels of performance. Effective leadership influences employee engagement, promotes a positive organizational culture, facilitates strategic decision-making, and enables effective change management.
- (iii) ***Performance management systems and processes for goal setting, feedback, and evaluation;*** This component received a mean rating of 3.78, suggesting the need for effective performance management systems. These systems should include processes for setting clear and measurable goals, providing regular feedback, and evaluating performance fairly. Such systems help monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and enable performance discussions. Wibisono et al (2019), found a noteworthy correlation was observed between the implementation of a performance management system and the performance of employees because it provides a structured framework for setting expectations, evaluating performance, and providing feedback. In addition, Samwel (2018), found performance management as a crucial undertaking conducted by firms to effectively monitor the performance of their personnel. Khan et al (2021), also found that the implementation of a performance management system had a notable impact on the

performance of employees because it enhanced employee motivation and engagement, facilitated goal clarity and alignment, improved communication and feedback, and promoted a culture of continuous improvement. Additionally, it increased accountability and improved performance evaluation processes.

- (iv) ***Transparent and fair performance evaluation and reward systems;*** The mean rating for this component was 3.96, highlighting the importance of transparent and fair performance evaluation and reward systems. These systems should be merit-based, ensuring that employees' performance is evaluated objectively and rewarded appropriately. Transparency in the evaluation process helps build trust and motivate employees. Badarai et al. (2023) support the notion that transparent and fair performance evaluation and reward systems profoundly impact organizational performance by enhancing employees' trust, confidence, and perception of the evaluation's transparency and impartiality, resulting in increased motivation, productivity, and engagement. Muller et al. (2018) also found that fair reward systems, which recognize and reinforce desired behaviours, not only encourage consistent high performance but also foster a positive work culture, cultivate employee loyalty, attract top talent, and ultimately contribute to long-term organizational success and improved performance.
- (v) ***Employee empowerment and involvement in decision-making processes;*** This component received a mean rating of 3.97, indicating the significance of empowering employees and involving them in decision-making. Giving employees autonomy, responsibility, and opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, driving performance improvement. Bakker and Albrecht (2018) emphasizes the crucial significance of employee engagement in enhancing both individual and organizational performance because it positively impacts employee well-being, fosters a sense of belonging, strengthens organizational culture, and promotes effective leadership, ultimately leading to higher profitability and competitive advantage in the market.
- (vi) ***Effective communication channels and practices throughout the organization;*** The mean rating for this component was 3.91, emphasizing the need for effective communication channels and practices. Open, transparent, and two-way communication is crucial for sharing information, aligning expectations, fostering collaboration, and creating a culture of performance. Haroon (2018) supports the view that communication has a strong impact

on performance when they found that effective communication significantly improves task coordination, reduces errors, enhances decision-making, and fosters a collaborative work environment. Haroon (2018) also emphasized the vital role of communication in achieving organizational goals and boosting overall performance.

These key components form a foundation for fostering a performance culture within ZINARA. By focusing on clear goals, leadership commitment, performance management systems, transparent evaluation and reward systems, employee empowerment, and effective communication, ZINARA can create an environment that promotes and supports high performance and accountability.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The study found that the culture in ZINARA promotes high performance, as indicated by the emphasis placed on this aspect, and employees are encouraged to take ownership of their work, indicating a sense of responsibility and accountability. Additionally, ZINARA values teamwork and collaboration, highlighting the importance of collective efforts. There is a clear alignment between ZINARA's values and employees' behavior, suggesting that employees perceive and embody the organization's values. Overall, these positive aspects of the organizational culture in ZINARA indicate a conducive work environment that supports high performance and fosters collaboration among employees.

The findings on leadership styles indicate that employees perceive the organization to have a variety of leadership styles. Among them, the autocratic leadership style received the highest average rating, indicating a strong consensus among employees. This suggests that decision-making authority is primarily held at the top, indicating a more directive approach. The democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles received slightly lower average ratings, indicating a moderate level of agreement. This suggests that employees have some degree of participation and autonomy in decision-making processes. The transformational leadership style also had a moderate presence, with leaders inspiring and motivating employees towards a shared vision or goal. The transactional leadership style, which relies on contingent rewards and performance-based exchanges, also garnered relatively strong agreement among employees. Overall, the results demonstrate that the

organizational culture at ZINARA is perceived to be significantly influenced by autocratic and transactional leadership styles, with some recognition of democratic, laissez-faire, and transformational styles to a lesser extent.

The results emphasize the importance of communication in cultivating a culture of performance and accountability at ZINARA. The findings indicate that employees perceive ZINARA to have open and transparent communication channels, reflecting a strong consensus among them. This suggests that communication is accessible and promotes transparency within the organization.

While there is room for improvement in terms of information flow between different levels of the organization, employees perceive ZINARA to effectively communicate performance expectations, indicating clarity in understanding their roles and responsibilities. The active solicitation and value placed on feedback and suggestions from employees also foster a culture of participation and accountability. Regular meetings and updates to keep employees informed about organizational performance are perceived positively, highlighting ZINARA's efforts to maintain transparency. Overall, the findings suggest that effective communication practices, including open channels, clear expectations, feedback-seeking, and regular updates, play a vital role in shaping a culture of performance and accountability within ZINARA. Effective communication, grounded in Biblical principles, should form the foundation, facilitating a clear and transparent information flow across the organization.

This study makes significant theoretical and practical contributions to understanding and improving performance in state-owned enterprises, using Zimbabwe's National Roads Administration as a case study. The study also illuminates the broader socio-economic implications of organizational culture, demonstrating how performance-oriented cultures in SOEs can contribute to sustainable growth and equitable resource distribution in developing nations. The study developed an actionable framework to help managers and leaders foster performance-oriented cultures within SOEs. This framework offers specific strategies to enhance performance, improve accountability, and promote employee engagement. The following framework (Figure 2) developed is based on the research findings.



Figure 2: Framework for fostering organisational culture in SOEs

To enhance organizational performance, the developed framework (Figure 2) integrates communication, leadership, processes, evaluation, and empowerment. Effective communication forms the foundation, facilitating a clear and transparent information flow across the organization. Strong leadership assumes a pivotal role by guiding the organization, establishing goals, and motivating employees towards achieving high performance. Streamlined processes ensure efficient workflows, optimizing productivity and minimizing errors.

Evaluation allows for the measurement of individual and team performance, providing valuable feedback for improvement. Additionally, empowerment fosters employee autonomy, decision-making authority, and skill development, cultivating a culture of innovation and engagement. Ultimately, this integrated framework, centered around communication and supported by effective leadership, streamlined processes, fair evaluation, and empowerment, leads to enhanced organizational performance, enabling sustainable growth and lasting success.

The following are the key recommendations for fostering a performance-oriented culture at ZINARA and similar state-owned enterprises:

- (i) Shift the dominant autocratic leadership style by instituting comprehensive training focused on transformational and democratic leadership practices. These programs should equip leaders with skills to inspire and motivate employees, delegate effectively, and foster a more participatory and innovative work environment.

- (ii) Address the critical gap in recognizing and rewarding exceptional performance by designing a new system that is transparent, merit-based, and directly links individual and team achievements to tangible rewards. This will help motivate employees and reinforce a culture of high performance and accountability.
- (iii) Prioritize and invest in targeted capacity-building initiatives to overcome the identified barrier of inadequate employee training. Develop programs that are strategically aligned with organizational goals to equip employees with the necessary skills, foster continuous learning, and empower them to perform at their best.
- (iv) While overall communication is a strength, improve the specific flow of information between different hierarchical levels within the organization. Implement structured feedback loops, regular cross-departmental meetings, and digital platforms to ensure strategic goals and operational updates are effectively disseminated and understood throughout the entire organization.
- (v) Formally implement the study's comprehensive framework that integrates clear goal-setting, leadership commitment, performance management systems, fair evaluation, employee empowerment, and effective communication. This integrated approach ensures that all cultural elements work in synergy to drive sustainable performance improvements.

Limitations of study and Suggestions for Future Research

The small sample of 76 can potentially limit the generalisability of the study findings outside ZINARA. Use of mixed methods and a larger sample could help with deeper insights. For future research, it is recommended to conduct a comparative, cross sectional analysis of organizational culture and performance across different Zimbabwean state-owned enterprise. This research would identify the factors that contribute to success or failure in various organizational contexts, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of different practices and interventions. Moreover, a deeper investigation into the influence of Zimbabwe's unique cultural, social, and political context on organizational performance is advised. This research would explore how local norms, values, and socio-political factors shape organizational culture and impact performance outcomes. Understanding these contextual elements is essential for designing tailored interventions that effectively address the specific challenges faced by state-owned enterprises in Zimbabwe.

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