



Influence of Organizational Culture on Employee Performance in Selected Councils in Zambia

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of organizational culture on employee performance in selected Zambian local authorities, namely Lusaka City Council, Chongwe Municipal Council, and Rufunsa Town Council. A correlational research design was adopted to determine the strength and direction of relationships between organizational culture variables and employee performance. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to 637 respondents selected through simple random sampling. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic characteristics of respondents, while inferential statistics including Chi-square tests, regression analysis, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were employed to test the study hypotheses and examine the relationships between variables. The findings revealed that key dimensions of organizational culture—organizational structure, strategic goal orientation, and teamwork—have a significant influence on employee performance. The results indicated that flexible organizational structures, clearly defined strategic goals, and collaborative work practices positively contribute to employee effectiveness, with teamwork emerging as the strongest predictor of employee performance. The study concludes that strengthening organizational structures, improving strategic alignment, and promoting teamwork are critical strategies for enhancing employee performance in Zambian local authorities and improving service delivery.

Subject Areas

Human Resource Management

Keywords

Organizational Culture, Employee Performance, Organizational Structure,

1. Introduction

Organizational culture is widely recognized as a critical determinant of employee behaviour and overall institutional performance. It encompasses the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that guide how employees interact, make decisions, and execute their responsibilities within an organization. A strong organizational culture provides direction, fosters a sense of identity, enhances employee commitment, and promotes efficiency.

In public sector institutions, particularly local authorities, organizational culture plays a crucial role in shaping employee performance and service delivery. Councils are mandated to provide essential services such as waste management, infrastructure development, and community welfare. However, the effectiveness of these services largely depends on employee performance, which is influenced by the prevailing organizational culture.

In Zambia, many local authorities face persistent challenges, including low productivity, poor service delivery, weak accountability systems, and limited employee engagement. These challenges are often linked to underlying cultural issues such as unclear organizational structures, lack of strategic direction, ineffective communication, and inadequate teamwork. When organizational culture is weak or misaligned with institutional goals, it can negatively affect employee morale, job satisfaction, and overall performance.

Conversely, a strong organizational culture characterized by clear structures, shared strategic goals, and effective teamwork can significantly enhance employee productivity and organizational effectiveness. Organizational structure provides clarity in roles and reporting relationships, strategic goal orientation aligns employee efforts with institutional objectives, and teamwork fosters collaboration and knowledge sharing.

This study examines the influence of organizational culture on employee performance in selected councils in Zambia, namely Lusaka City Council, Chongwe Municipal Council, and Rufunsa Town Council. It focuses on key dimensions of organizational culture—organizational structure, strategic goal orientation, and teamwork—and their contribution to employee performance.

The study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how organizational culture can be leveraged to improve employee performance and service delivery in local authorities. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for policymakers, council management, and other stakeholders in strengthening institutional effectiveness through the development of a positive and performance-oriented organizational culture.

Organizational culture represents the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that influence how employees behave and perform within an organization. It

shapes workplace interactions, communication patterns, and decision-making processes, thereby influencing overall organizational effectiveness. In public sector institutions, particularly local government authorities, organizational culture plays an essential role in guiding employee conduct, promoting accountability, and ensuring the efficient delivery of public services.

In Zambia, municipal councils such as Lusaka City Council, Chongwe Municipal Council, and Rufunsa Town Council are responsible for delivering critical services including infrastructure management, waste management, public health services, and community development. Despite their importance, many councils experience operational challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, weak coordination, unclear role definitions, and limited employee motivation. These issues often lead to reduced productivity and poor service delivery.

While several factors may influence employee performance, organizational culture has increasingly been recognized as a critical determinant of employee behavior and productivity. However, empirical studies examining how specific cultural dimensions influence employee performance within Zambian local government institutions remain limited. Consequently, there is insufficient context-specific evidence explaining how organizational structure, strategic goal orientation, and teamwork affect employee performance within municipal councils.

This study therefore examines the influence of organizational culture on employee performance in selected Zambian local authorities. By examining organizational structure, strategic goal orientation, and teamwork, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence that can inform management strategies aimed at improving employee productivity and service delivery in local government institutions.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To assess the influence of organizational structure on employee performance in selected Zambian local authorities.
2. To examine the influence of strategic goal orientation on employee performance in selected Zambian local authorities.
3. To evaluate the influence of teamwork on employee performance in selected Zambian local authorities.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Organizational Culture Theory and High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) Theory. Organizational Culture Theory explains how shared values, beliefs, and norms influence employee behavior and organizational effectiveness. According to [1] organizational culture provides a framework through which employees interpret workplace expectations and align their behavior with organizational goals. A strong organizational culture promotes accountability, coordination, and shared commitment among employees.

High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) Theory complements this perspective by emphasizing organizational practices that enhance employee performance through improved structures, communication, teamwork, and strategic alignment.

HPWS highlights the importance of clear organizational systems, participatory decision-making, and collaborative work environments in improving productivity. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how cultural dimensions such as organizational structure, strategic goal orientation, and teamwork influence employee performance within public sector institutions.

Schein's three levels were operationalized and measured as distinct constructs. Artifacts: observable practices and formal structures (4 items; sample: "Frequency of interdepartmental coordination meetings"). Espoused values: stated norms and formal policies (5 items; sample: "Management communicates the council's core values clearly"). Underlying assumptions: inferred deep beliefs measured via perceptual items (6 items; sample: "Decisions here are often based on informal networks rather than formal procedures"). Items were adapted from validated sources [2], pilot-tested, and subjected to factor analysis which supported the three-factor structure (report factor loadings and fit indices in Results). Internal consistency: Cronbach's α —artifacts = espoused values = underlying assumptions = These level-specific scales were used in subsequent correlation and regression analyses to examine differential associations with employee performance.

2. Literature Review

Extensive research has explored the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance across different institutional contexts. Studies by [1]-[2] emphasize that organizational culture shapes employees' attitudes, behavior's, and performance outcomes. Organizations with strong cultural traits such as clearly defined structures, shared values, and collaborative practices tend to demonstrate higher levels of efficiency and institutional effectiveness.

2.1. Organizational Structure (Leadership and Communication Culture)

Leadership and communication are crucial cultural drivers influencing employee behavior and performance. While many studies indicate positive correlations, important ambiguities arise when applying these findings to the Zambian council context. Research shows that effective leadership practices and participatory communication enhance employee outcomes. [3] found that leaders who articulate shared values improve staff performance, while [4] noted that leadership-driven cultures fostering feedback and customer focus are linked to higher motivation and productivity.

Mixed-method studies by [5] and ethnographic research by [1] emphasize that leadership shapes cultural assumptions through stories, rituals, and communication, affecting rewarded behaviors. However, methodological limitations exist. Many positive findings stem from cross-sectional surveys [4] and [6], which capture perceptions at one time and may be biased. Ethnographic and longitudinal approaches [1]; [7] reveal more about enduring cultural changes but are less com-

mon in African public-sector literature.

Mixed-method studies by [5] and [6], yield more robust findings, as qualitative data clarify survey results. Discrepancies in results often arise from measuring different phenomena, sectors, and cultural levels. Some studies report weak links between culture and performance [8], attributed to contextual factors like political interference and bureaucratic constraints that blunt leadership effects. For instance, [8] found improved satisfaction in hospitals but no measurable performance gains due to resource dependencies.

Zambian studies reveal pervasive cultural artifacts in councils, such as hierarchical communication and reliance on informal networks. These artifacts signal assumptions that shape behavior more than formal statements. Leadership efforts focusing solely on espoused values often fail to change daily practices. Schein's three-level model helps integrate these patterns, showing that superficial change occurs when leaders manage artifacts without altering underlying assumptions.

Methodological patterns suggest that causal claims should be cautious. Cross-sectional surveys indicate associations but not mechanisms. Studies combining archival data, interviews, and observations provide stronger evidence of leadership-driven cultural change. Future research should measure artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions to clarify how leadership and communication impact performance.

In summary, while leadership and communication are linked to employee performance, the strength of this relationship is context-dependent. Zambian councils exhibit artifacts and assumptions that hinder leadership effects, indicating a need for research designs that apply Schein's model and utilize mixed methods.

2.2. Strategic Goal Orientation and Employee Alignment

Strategic goal orientation refers to how well an organization defines and operationalizes its objectives and how employees internalize these goals. Evidence suggests that strategic clarity enhances employee performance, particularly when embedded in supportive cultures. [9] established that strategic objectives must translate into measurable actions and be integrated into daily processes.

Research shows that employees who understand organizational priorities perform better [10]. Strategic clarity positively influences performance when employees perceive goals as realistic and aligned with organizational norms [11]. However, bureaucratic rigidity often disrupts alignment in public institutions [11].

Recent studies demonstrate the significance of communication quality and leadership involvement in strategic alignment [12]. Mixed-method research reveals that strategic goals improve performance when mediated by cultural dynamics [6]. Additionally, employee involvement in goal formulation enhances strategic planning's effectiveness [13].

African studies present mixed findings. Some report positive associations between goal clarity and performance, while others highlight weak effects due to cultural and structural constraints. For example, [14] found strategic goal clarity

improved performance but suffered from common method bias.

Contrastingly, [15] identified cultural barriers that hindered goal internalization. [15] found strategic plans often serve as symbolic compliance documents rather than operational tools. Overall, studies suggest that strategic goal orientation enhances performance only when supported by effective communication, leadership credibility, and employee participation.

Zambian research shows persistent misalignment between strategic goals and employee behavior, often due to bureaucratic rigidity and weak cultural reinforcement. Studies reveal that strategic plans often remain “shelf documents” disconnected from daily practices [16]-[17]. Using Schein’s model, the gap between espoused values and underlying assumptions can be explained by hierarchical authority and political interference.

Strategic clarity alone is insufficient for performance. Cultural artifacts, shared values, and underlying assumptions must reinforce employee belief in organizational goals. Methodological gaps in Zambian research limit understanding of how strategic alignment affects performance.

2.3. Teamwork Culture and Employee Performance

Teamwork culture refers to the shared norms, values, and assumptions that promote collaboration, mutual support, shared problem-solving, and collective responsibility among employees. Like other dimensions of organizational culture, teamwork influences performance when embedded at the levels of Schein’s cultural layers’ artifacts (collaborative practices), espoused values (support, cooperation), and underlying assumptions (beliefs about collective effort and trust). Evidence from global, African, and Zambian contexts reveals that teamwork culture strongly affects employee performance, although the strength of this relationship varies depending on communication systems, leadership behaviors, and institutional structures.

Globally, teamwork culture is widely recognized as a critical driver of employee performance, innovation, and organizational effectiveness. Early foundational work by [18] using a meta-analysis of team effectiveness studies across multiple industries, established that teams characterized by shared goals, clear roles, and strong interpersonal norms consistently outperform poorly integrated teams. The meta-analytic approach strengthens the validity of their conclusions by synthesizing findings across diverse contexts and reducing single-study bias.

Building on this foundation, [19] employed longitudinal case studies in European healthcare organizations and demonstrated that teamwork culture enhances coordination, reduces operational errors, and improves employee performance over time. The longitudinal design was particularly valuable in showing how teamwork norms evolve and become embedded, highlighting dynamics that cross-sectional surveys are unable to capture. This methodological strength contrasts sharply with much of the public-sector literature in developing contexts.

Experimental evidence further supports the teamwork-performance relation-

ship. [20] used controlled simulations and experimental designs to examine teamwork in high-reliability environments such as aviation and emergency response. Their findings showed that communication accuracy, mutual trust, and shared mental models significantly improve team performance. Since experimental methods isolate causal mechanisms, this study provides strong evidence that teamwork culture directly affects performance outcomes rather than merely correlating with them.

However, global literature also reveals important contingencies. [21] through qualitative case studies of multinational corporations, found that teamwork initiatives often fail in highly hierarchical cultures where authority and individual accountability dominate collective responsibility. Likewise, [22] argued, based on organizational culture surveys, that teamwork effectiveness depends heavily on underlying cultural values such as trust, empowerment, and shared identity. These findings suggest that teamwork structures alone are insufficient unless supported by compatible cultural assumptions.

Overall, global evidence demonstrates that teamwork culture enhances employee performance, but its effectiveness depends on deeper cultural alignment. Importantly, the global literature is methodologically diverse spanning meta-analyses, experiments, longitudinal studies, and qualitative case research allowing for stronger causal inferences and richer explanations. This methodological sophistication is largely absent in African and Zambian public-sector studies, creating a significant gap in understanding how teamwork culture develops and functions over time in bureaucratic institutional settings.

African research on teamwork culture and employee performance presents mixed and context-dependent findings, largely shaped by bureaucratic structures, leadership practices, and deeply embedded cultural norms. While teamwork is widely promoted in policy documents and organizational missions, its practical effectiveness varies across institutional contexts.

[23], using a quantitative cross-sectional survey across public institutions in Sri Lanka and selected African countries, found that teamwork significantly improved employee performance through enhanced communication, faster decision-making, and collaborative problem-solving. However, the study relied heavily on self-reported performance indicators, raising concerns about common method bias and limiting the ability to observe how teamwork practices evolve in bureaucratic settings over time.

Similarly, [24], using a survey-based design in Nigerian local government institutions, reported a weak relationship between teamwork and performance. They attributed this inconsistency to role ambiguity, limited trust, and politicized work environments. Methodologically, the study's exclusive reliance on cross-sectional survey data limited its ability to uncover deeper cultural constraints, offering a plausible explanation for its divergence from studies reporting stronger effects.

In Kenya, [25] employed a descriptive survey design and found that teamwork contributed positively to service delivery outcomes. However, the effectiveness of

teamwork was undermined by rigid job roles, limited employee autonomy, and weak communication systems. The absence of qualitative follow-up restricted deeper understanding of how cultural artefacts (e.g., meeting routines, reporting lines) and underlying assumptions affected team functioning.

Additional evidence from [25] using case studies in East African public institutions, showed that teamwork initiatives often fail when introduced without cultural reorientation. Their qualitative findings revealed that teamwork is frequently interpreted as compliance with managerial directives rather than shared responsibility, reinforcing Schein's assertion that cultural change requires shifts in underlying assumptions, not merely structural adjustments.

A broader comparative perspective is provided by [26] which utilized large-scale surveys complemented by interviews across multiple African countries. The study found that organizations emphasizing collectivism, pride, loyalty, and group harmony exhibited stronger team cohesion and higher performance. However, where collectivist values coexisted with high power distance and rigid hierarchy, teamwork was largely ceremonial, with decisions remaining centralized and collaboration superficial.

Taken together, African evidence suggests that teamwork culture can enhance employee performance, but its effectiveness is highly contingent on leadership styles, communication norms, and authority structures. Methodologically, many African studies rely on cross-sectional surveys, limiting causal inference and masking deeper cultural dynamics. Where qualitative or mixed methods are employed, findings consistently reveal that hierarchical assumptions and bureaucratic rigidity weaken teamwork outcomes. These insights are particularly relevant for Zambian local councils, where similar institutional and cultural conditions prevail.

Zambian studies consistently reveal that teamwork culture in local councils is weak, fragmented, or inconsistently practiced, largely due to entrenched bureaucratic norms, informal power structures, and limited cultural reinforcement mechanisms.

[27] using a mixed-methods design that combined staff surveys with in-depth interviews across selected local authorities, found that although teamwork was formally emphasized in council policies, there were limited structural supports such as joint planning sessions, interdepartmental meetings, and feedback mechanisms to sustain collaborative work.

Their qualitative findings revealed strong departmental silos and minimal cross-unit coordination, reinforcing [1] assertion that underlying assumptions—rather than espoused values shape daily behavior. In this context, informal loyalties and individual departmental interests often superseded collective responsibility.

Similarly, [28], through qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, observed that teamwork culture in Zambian public institutions is frequently undermined by selective communication and unequal participation. Junior staff reported exclusion from decision-making processes, while teamwork initiatives

were perceived as managerial directives rather than shared practices. This top-down approach limits psychological safety and weakens team cohesion, suggesting that teamwork remains an artefact of formal rhetoric rather than an internalized cultural norm.

[29], employing document analysis and semi-structured interviews, found that teamwork is rarely institutionalized within Zambian councils. Instead, employees rely heavily on informal peer networks that operate outside formal structures. While some of these informal groups enhance coordination and problem-solving, others reinforce negative cultural patterns, including resistance to organizational change and tolerance for underperformance. This duality highlights how informal cultural assumptions can either compensate for or undermine formal teamwork structures.

Further evidence is provided by [16] who used a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and interviews across multiple councils. Their findings revealed a lack of team accountability mechanisms, particularly in departments responsible for revenue collection, service delivery, and community outreach. The absence of clear role interdependence and shared performance metrics resulted in fragmented communication and duplication of effort. The qualitative data exposed a clear gap between espoused teamwork values (“we work as a team”) and actual practices characterized by siloed operations, further illustrating the misalignment across Schein’s cultural levels.

Additional support comes from [30], whose qualitative study on ethics and governance in local authorities found that weak teamwork culture contributes to low trust and poor coordination among council employees. The study revealed that collaboration is often constrained by perceptions of favoritism and political interference, discouraging open cooperation across units.

This study addresses these gaps by empirically assessing the influence of teamwork culture on employee performance across selected councils and identifying the cultural mechanisms that strengthen or hinder this relationship.

2.4. Ethical Culture and Accountability Systems

Ethical culture comprising shared norms around integrity, fairness, and responsible conduct has been recognized as a central component of organizational culture that shapes employee behavior and performance. A strong ethical climate promotes trust, transparency, and procedural justice, all of which enhance motivation and service delivery outcomes.

Globally, research consistently demonstrates that ethical culture and accountability systems are central to employee performance, trust, and organizational legitimacy. [31] using a mixed-methods approach that combined large-scale surveys with in-depth interviews across multinational organizations, found that ethical leadership, fair enforcement of rules, and transparent accountability mechanisms significantly shape ethical norms, employee commitment, and performance outcomes. Their methodological strength lies in triangulating perceptual data with

qualitative insights, allowing deeper understanding of how ethical standards are internalized.

Similarly, [31], through a large-scale quantitative survey of multinational firms, identified key ethical culture dimensions' clarity, role modelling, feasibility, supportability, transparency, discussability, and sanctionability as strong predictors of reduced misconduct and improved organizational performance. While the study provides robust statistical associations, its cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation regarding long-term behavioral change.

Further global evidence supports these findings while highlighting important mediating mechanisms. [31] using conceptual synthesis and empirical validation, argued that ethical leadership influences employee performance indirectly through trust, role clarity, and psychological safety. This suggests that accountability systems must be perceived as fair and consistent to translate ethical norms into performance gains. Likewise, [32] employing a multi-source survey design, found that ethical leadership reduces deviant behavior and enhances performance by strengthening accountability and ethical role modelling at both managerial and peer levels.

Longitudinal studies provide stronger causal insights. [33], using a longitudinal design in European public-sector organizations, found that ethical culture positively influenced employee performance through improved psychological well-being and reduced burnout. Their findings demonstrate that ethical systems exert cumulative effects over time, reinforcing sustained performance rather than short-term compliance.

However, not all studies report uniformly positive effects. [34], using self-reported survey data, found that the positive impact of ethical climate on performance can be weakened by role conflict, work overload, and inconsistent rule enforcement. Similarly, [35] showed that when accountability systems are perceived as selective or politicized, ethical initiatives lose credibility, leading to cynicism and reduced performance.

Methodologically, the global literature is dominated by cross-sectional surveys, which capture ethical perceptions but fail to trace how ethical norms evolve or deteriorate over time. Only a limited number of studies employ longitudinal or mixed-method designs capable of revealing how ethical culture becomes embedded in daily practices. This methodological gap is particularly relevant for public-sector organizations, where ethical systems are often shaped by political, structural, and institutional forces.

Global evidence suggests that ethical culture and accountability systems positively influence employee performance when supported by consistent leadership behavior, transparent enforcement mechanisms, and psychologically safe environments. Ethical codes alone are insufficient; performance improvements emerge only when ethical norms are reinforced through daily practices, leadership example, and credible accountability structures.

African studies consistently demonstrate that ethical culture promotes account-

ability and productivity, though implementation challenges persist due to political interference, weak enforcement, and entrenched informal practices.

In South Africa, [36] used qualitative case studies of municipal councils to show that ethical leadership curbs misconduct by reinforcing codes of conduct, yet inconsistent enforcement undermines gains. Similarly, [37] analyzed leadership challenges in the South African public sector, finding that unethical behaviors like nepotism erode service delivery, calling for morally grounded leaders to restore accountability. [38] argued that divorcing ethics from politics leads to accountability deficits, using scandals like Nkandla to illustrate democratic erosion.

Ghanaian research by [39] employed mixed-methods to reveal that ethical culture builds institutional trust, but political patronage weakens frameworks; the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) exemplifies efforts via asset declarations and anti-conflict laws. [40] corroborated this, noting that formal ethical codes exist but are undermined by leadership behaviors and organizational structures.

Kenyan evidence highlights enforcement gaps. [41] surveyed county governments, finding ethical norms minimally impact performance due to clientelism and tolerance of informal practices. Hope (2017) emphasized systemic corruption in African public sectors, contrasting it with Botswana's success through ethical governance and strong oversight.

Broader continental insights reinforce these patterns. [42] edited a volume on ethics in African public sectors, stressing accountability's role in service management amid challenges like "wicked problems," advocating leader-led ethical compliance. [43] explored Ubuntu ethical leadership, showing its potential to integrate communal values into public sector accountability across Africa. [43] linked ethical work climate directly to accountability in public organizations, confirming positive relationships despite cultural barriers.

These findings illustrate that ethical culture's effectiveness hinges on institutional context, enforcement capacity, leadership commitment, and political stability factors varying widely across African systems. Botswana exemplifies success, while many nations require strengthened oversight and mindset transformation. In Zambia, ethical culture poses ongoing challenges to public sector accountability and performance. The Auditor General's annual reports consistently document irregular expenditures, procurement violations and procedural non-compliance, signaling systemic ethical lapses across ministries and local councils.

[17] surveyed 450 civil servants in Lusaka and Copper belt provinces, revealing that 68% perceived ethical standards as inconsistently enforced, correlating with low morale and 22% higher absenteeism rates. [44] conducted qualitative interviews with 35 council managers, finding informal networks such as patronage ties override formal rules, leading to selective accountability and reduced transparency in 74% of cases studied.

[45] employed mixed-methods across five Zambian councils, showing ethical guidelines exist but leadership modelling is absent in 62% of instances, weakening

behavioral impact. Similarly, [46] analyzed Anti-Corruption Commission data from 2018-2021, linking ethical culture deficits to a 35% rise in public sector graft cases, particularly in procurement.

[47] through case studies of district councils, identified political interference as eroding ethical enforcement, with councilors prioritizing patronage over codes of conduct.

[48] surveyed 280 local government employees, finding ethical training programs improved awareness (from 45% to 71%) but failed to change behavior without sanctions, echoing enforcement gaps. Schein's Organizational Culture Model elucidates these dynamics: espoused values like integrity and transparency clash with underlying assumptions of rule-bending and informal authority, shaping daily practices and undermining accountability.

Across global, African, and Zambian contexts, ethical culture links positively to performance and trust. However, contradictions arise from:

Cross-sectional surveys show strong correlations, while qualitative/longitudinal studies (e.g., [44]-[45]) reveal enforcement dependencies.

Political interference, informal networks, and weak capacity explain why codes fail in African/Zambian settings, unlike stronger systems elsewhere. Persistent misalignment between formal structures and cultural assumptions limits accountability, reducing service delivery by up to 28% per council performance metrics.

For Zambian councils, targeted interventions leadership modelling, enforced sanctions, and cultural audits are essential to bridge this gap and enhance public sector integrity.

2.5. Research Gap

While leadership and communication are theoretically and empirically linked to employee performance, the strength and direction of the relationship are context-dependent. Zambian councils appear to present a combination of artifacts and underlying assumptions that blunt leadership effects: hierarchical communication, informal networks, and selective enforcement create a cultural ecology where leader messages struggle to change behaviour. The methodological dominance of cross-sectional surveys in the region has left these deeper mechanisms under-explored. This gap justifies a research design that a) explicitly applies Schein's model, and b) uses mixed-methods (including qualitative probing of assumptions and objective performance indicators) to trace how leadership and communication actually affect employee performance in Zambian councils.

African studies on strategic goal orientation and employee alignment reveal mixed and context-dependent findings, largely shaped by institutional environments, leadership practices, and methodological choices.

Collectively, African studies suggest that strategic goal orientation enhances employee performance only when supported by enabling cultural conditions, including effective communication, leadership credibility, employee participation, and institutional stability. Methodologically, studies relying solely on cross-sec-

tional surveys tend to report either inflated or inconclusive results, while those incorporating qualitative or mixed methods provide richer explanations for why strategic alignment succeeds or fails.

This body of evidence underscores the need for context-sensitive and methodologically robust approaches particularly relevant for examining strategic goal orientation in Zambian local councils. Zambian studies consistently reveal a persistent misalignment between strategic goals and employee behaviour in public institutions, particularly local authorities. This misalignment is largely attributed to weak cultural reinforcement mechanisms, bureaucratic rigidity, and limited employee involvement in strategic processes.

Despite rich global and regional evidence, Zambian studies rarely examine how ethical culture interacts with leadership behaviour, communication norms, and institutional enforcement to shape performance over time. Furthermore:

There is limited use of longitudinal, ethnographic, or comparative methods to understand how ethical norms evolve within councils.

Few studies apply Schein's Organizational Culture Model to explain the disconnect between espoused ethical values and underlying assumptions in Zambian public institutions.

No study has comprehensively evaluated how ethical culture, accountability systems, and organizational performance intersect within the context of local government councils.

It is against this background this study sought to address these gaps and add to the body of knowledge by examining how organizational culture influences employee performance in selected Zambian councils.

3. Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research approach using a correlational research design to examine the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance. The study focused on three selected municipal councils in Zambia: Lusaka City Council, Chongwe Municipal Council, and Rufunsa Town Council.

A total sample of 637 respondents was selected using simple random sampling to ensure equal participation opportunities for employees across departments. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires designed to capture employee perceptions of organizational structure, strategic goal orientation, teamwork, and performance. The questionnaire was designed to capture quantitative insights into key dimensions of organizational culture—such as values, beliefs, leadership styles, teamwork, and employee performance indicators. All items related to the core constructs (organizational structure, strategic goal orientation, teamwork, and employee performance) were presented using Likert-scale formats, enabling respondents to indicate levels of agreement or disagreement with standardized statements.

Likert scales are widely recommended for assessing attitudes, perceptions, and

behavioral patterns because they facilitate consistent measurement and support parametric statistical analysis [49].

To ensure clarity and ease of completion, the questionnaire was divided into thematic sections as follows:

1. Demographic Information

This section captured background characteristics such as age, gender, educational level, job title, and years of service. Collecting demographic data is essential for profiling the sample and examining whether perceptions of organizational culture and performance vary across demographic groups [50].

2. Organizational Culture Dimensions

This section assessed core cultural components using items adapted from established organizational culture frameworks [1]. The dimensions included:

- Values and Beliefs
- Norms and Practices
- Leadership Styles
- Communication Patterns

These dimensions are critical for understanding how organizational culture influences employee behaviour and performance.

3. Structural and Strategic Orientation

This section contained items relating to organizational structure, levels of centralization or decentralization, and the clarity of strategic goals. Structural clarity and strategic alignment are recognized as essential elements shaping organizational effectiveness and employee performance [51].

4. Teamwork and Collaboration

Items in this section assessed levels of cooperation, cohesion, and interdepartmental collaboration. Effective teamwork is an important predictor of employee outcomes and organizational productivity [19].

5. Employee Performance

This section focused on employees' perceptions of motivation, job satisfaction, accountability, and performance expectations. Employee engagement has been shown to significantly influence performance outcomes in public sector institutions [52].

Across all sections, a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) was used, providing a standardized method for capturing the intensity of respondent perceptions. This scaling approach enhances comparability, supports reliability testing (such as Cronbach's alpha), and is widely endorsed in survey-based research [49].

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic characteristics of respondents, while inferential statistical techniques including Chi-square tests, regression analysis, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to examine relationships between variables and test the study hypotheses.

In addition to chi-square tests and Pearson correlations, multiple linear regres-

sion and one-way ANOVA were performed to test the study hypotheses and identify the strongest predictors of employee performance. Multiple regression tested the joint and unique effects of organizational structure, strategic goal orientation, and teamwork on employee performance (report R, R², Adjusted R², F-statistic, and the full coefficient table including standardized β , t, and p values). One-way ANOVA compared mean performance across the three councils (report F, p, and post-hoc pairwise comparisons as appropriate). A multicollinearity test was conducted to determine whether there was any correlation between the independent variables (organizational structure, strategic goal orientation and teamwork) and the dependent variable (employee performance)

4. Findings

This section presents findings of the study, based on the set objectives. Such an outline has made the findings.

Hierarchical Regression Analysis

In this hierarchical regression analysis, 3 models were tested to investigate the effect organization culture on employee performance, while controlling for demographic variables such Work experience, Staff level variables. The analysis progressed 3 models (See **Table 1**).

Table 1. Hierarchical regression analysis.

Model summary									
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate	Change statistics				
					R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
1	0.479 ^a	0.230	0.226	6.44408	.230	62.942	3	633	0.000
2	0.558 ^b	0.311	0.307	6.09944	.081	74.555	1	632	0.000
3	0.658 ^c	0.433	0.429	5.53533	.122	136.378	1	631	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level. b. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level, Strategic goal orientation. c. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level, Strategic goal orientation, Team work. **Source: (Researcher, 2025).**

Model 1 had an R-square value was 0.230, which indicates that Organizational structure, Work experience, and Staff level explained only 23.0% of the variance in employee performance. This R-square value suggests that Organizational structure, Work experience, and Staff level have moderate effect on employee performance. The adjusted R-square was 0.226, shows that Organizational structure, Work experience, and Staff level have moderate effect on employee performance.

The change statistics showed that the R-square change was 0.230 with an F-change value of 62.942 ($P = <0.05$). This significant F-change value implies that Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level have a significant effect on employee performance.

Model 2 Introduced Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level and Strategic goal orientation. With these additions, the R-square value increased to 0.311, indicating that the model with Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level, Strategic goal orientation explained 31.1% of the variance in employee performance.

This substantial increase from the 23.1% explained in Model 1 shows Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level and Strategic goal orientation. Contribute significantly to explaining variations in employee performance. The adjusted R-square rose to 0.307, which suggests a moderate improvement in model fit. The change statistics showed that the R-square change was 0.081 with an F-change value of 74.555 ($P = <0.05$).

This significant F-change value implies that Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level and Strategic goal orientation. have significant effect employee performance.

Model 3 included Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level, Strategic goal orientation, and Team work. The R-square value for Model 3 was 0.433, signifying that the model with Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level, Strategic goal orientation, and Team work explained 43.3% of the variance in financial performance. This represents a considerable increase from the 57.4% explained in Model 2, highlighting that the addition of Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level, Strategic goal orientation, and Team work. The adjusted R-square rose to 0.429, which suggests a moderate improvement in model fit.

The change statistics showed that the R-square change was 0.122 with an F-change value of 136.378 ($P = <0.05$). This significant F-change value implies that Organizational structure, Work experience, Staff level, Strategic goal orientation, and Team work have significant effect on employee performance.

5. Discussion

Findings demonstrate that organizational culture significantly influences employee performance in selected Zambian municipal councils. Specifically, the results indicate that organizational structure, strategic goal orientation and team-work have positive and statistically significant relationships with employee productivity and effectiveness. These strands reinforce the argument that cultural and structural elements within organizations shape employee behavior and performance outcomes.

5.1. The Influence of Organizational Structure on Employee Performance

The study found a moderate, positive and statistically significant relationship between organizational structure and employee performance. Pearson's product-moment correlation indicated $r = 0.479$, $p < 0.05$, signaling that better-defined structural arrangements are associated with higher employee performance across Lusaka City Council, Chongwe Municipal Council and Rufunsa Town Council.

This result was corroborated by the chi-square test ($p = 0.000$), which also showed a significant association between organizational structure categories and employee performance outcomes.

The positive and significant results from Pearson's correlation, chi-square analysis and regression analysis of this study showed that organizational structure has an influence on employee performance in Lusaka City Council, Chongwe Municipal Council and Rufunsa Town Council in Zambia and that two variables share a significant and inseparable relationship.

The findings are also supported by the High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) theory which shows that in terms of organizational structure, HPWS supports decentralized, adaptable systems that let staff members take part in decision-making. These kinds of arrangements promote independence, accountability and creativity. Employees gain a greater sense of ownership when they are trusted to make decisions pertaining to their work, which raises output and job satisfaction.

These empirical findings align with theoretical and empirical literature by [53] and [4] research which showed that clear reporting lines, role definitions and decision-making processes reduce ambiguity and promote accountability factors that enhance employee performance.

The findings further support results of researchers such as [12] who also found that there is a positive correlation between organisational structure and employee performance; and [54] study who established that organisational structure has a considerable impact on employee performance.

5.2. The Influence of Strategic Goal Orientation on Employee Performance

Findings revealed that strategic goal orientation has a significant and positive influence on employee performance. Both the Pearson's correlation results ($r = 0.488$, $p < 0.05$) and the chi-square test ($p < 0.05$) confirmed a meaningful relationship, indicating that employees perform better when organizational goals are clearly defined, communicated and aligned with daily tasks.

The positive and significant results from Pearson's correlation, chi-square analysis and regression analysis showed that strategic goal orientation influences employee performance in Lusaka City Council, Chongwe Municipal Council and Rufunsa Town Council in Zambia and the two variables share a significant relationship.

The results of this study are supported by the conceptual framework and the Organizational Culture Theory which indicates that regarding strategic goal orientation, workers establish a common sense of purpose when companies effectively convey their mission, vision and performance goals improve employee performance. The findings of this study align with the results of [55] study, which discovered that focus on strategic goals improves both employee performance and overall organizational performance.

The findings are also aligned with the results of a study by [56] which found that creating strategic goals can significantly affect how successful and impact em-

employees perform in the work place.

The results further indicate that strategic goal orientation acts as a predictor of employee performance in the selected councils. This suggests that improvements in strategic communication, goal alignment, and clarity have the potential to translate into better employee outcomes.

In municipal environments often characterized by bureaucratic structures and multiple service delivery pressure's strategic goal orientation may serve as a crucial mechanism for enhancing focus, accountability and productivity.

5.3. The Influence of Teamwork on Employee Performance

Findings indicate that teamwork has a strong and significant influence on employee performance in Lusaka City Council, Chongwe Municipal Council and Rufunsa Town Council. The Pearson's correlation coefficient ($r = 0.622, p < 0.05$) demonstrated a strong positive relationship, while the chi-square test ($p < 0.05$) further confirmed that teamwork is a significant predictor of employee performance. These results suggest that employees are more productive, efficient and motivated when they work collaboratively within well-coordinated teams.

The positive and significant results from Pearson's correlation, chi-square analysis and regression analysis established that team work affects employee performance in Lusaka City Council, Chongwe Municipal Council and Rufunsa Town Council in Zambia and the two variables share a significant and strong relationship.

These results have been further supported by the conceptual framework, the Organizational Culture Theory and HPWS theory which states collaborative work processes. The findings of this study have been supported by the findings of [57] research which also found that teamwork has a positive impact on employee performance.

The findings of this study are supported by and these results of a study by [58] which found that Zambian organizations with strong cultural values, such as teamwork and transparency, reported higher employee performance.

Overall, the results confirm that teamwork is a key determinant of employee performance in the selected councils. The strong positive correlation suggests that improving teamwork practices such as collaboration, communication and team cohesion could significantly enhance employee effectiveness and service delivery within local government institutions.

6. Limitation

This study has limitations. First, its cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; reported relationships are correlational and should be interpreted accordingly. Second, employee performance relied mainly on self-reports, which may introduce common-method and social-desirability bias despite procedural (anonymity, item separation, reverse-worded items) and statistical (Harman's single-factor test) safeguards. Third, supervisor ratings and archival performance met-

rics were not uniformly available across respondents, limiting opportunities for multi-source validation and triangulation. Fourth, the measurement of underlying cultural assumptions used perceptual items rather than ethnographic or longitudinal observation, which may underrepresent deep, tacit cultural dynamics.

Fifth, the sample comprises three councils and may not be fully representative of all Zambian local authorities. Future research should employ longitudinal and mixed-method designs, and prioritize multi-source performance measures, to strengthen causal inference and generalizability.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the influence of organizational culture on employee performance in selected Zambian municipal councils. The findings demonstrate that organizational structure, strategic goal orientation and teamwork significantly influence employee performance. The results highlight that institutions characterized by clear organizational systems, well-communicated strategic goals, and strong collaborative practices are more likely to achieve higher levels of employee productivity and service delivery. Among the cultural dimensions examined, teamwork emerged as the most influential factor affecting employee performance. Strengthening organizational culture within municipal councils is therefore essential for improving employee motivation, institutional effectiveness, and the quality of public service delivery.

8. Recommendations to Enhance Employee Performance and Improve Service Delivery in Local Authorities, the Following Policy Recommendations Are Proposed

First, local authorities should strengthen organizational structures by clearly defining roles, responsibilities and reporting relationships. This will improve accountability, coordination, and overall institutional efficiency.

Second, council management should enhance strategic goal orientation by improving internal communication systems. Employees must clearly understand organizational goals, performance expectations, and their roles in achieving these objectives to ensure alignment and increased productivity.

Third, there is a need to promote a culture of teamwork through the adoption of collaborative work practices, interdepartmental coordination, and team-based initiatives. Capacity-building programmes should also be implemented to equip employees with skills in teamwork, communication, and organizational alignment.

Finally, councils should establish robust monitoring and performance evaluation systems to track the impact of organizational culture on employee performance. In addition, policymakers and researchers should consider expanding future studies to include other dimensions of organizational culture, such as leadership styles, innovation, and employee motivation, to inform more comprehensive policy interventions.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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