Cape Peninsula
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Implementation of strategic management: An investigation of informal structures in a selected public sector in an African country.

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This research employs systems theory as its foundational theoretical framework, integrating a comprehensive mixed-methods approach to elucidate the intricate interplay between strategic management and informal organisational structures. The inquiry focuses on the application of strategic management techniques in the public sector, using the Gweru Local Authority in Zimbabwe as a case study. Grounded in Iceberg Systems Theory, this study seeks to unveil the latent structures and patterns that underpin organisational dynamics. Data was meticulously gathered through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including local government representatives, staff members, and community leaders. The analysis yielded four principal findings: the pervasive influence of political factors on decision-making processes; the effectiveness of change management strategies; the essential role of stakeholder engagement in the successful implementation of initiatives; and the prevalence of psychological antecedents that significantly shape organisational behaviour. These results underscore the need to identify and address informal dynamics, as they play a crucial role in enhancing overall organisational performance and achieving strategic objectives. However, the research acknowledges a critical limitation: its narrow geographic focus, which may constrain the generalisability of its findings. Thus, it is recommended that subsequent studies transcend this localised context to incorporate diverse geographic settings. Such an exploration would facilitate comparative analyses that might reveal distinct dynamics and outcomes across varied contexts, thereby enriching our understanding of strategic management within the public sector. In essence, this study not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge but also provokes deeper philosophical inquiries into the nature of power, influence, and human behaviour in organisational settings. It invites scholars to reflect on the complexities inherent in public sector management and the subtle yet profound effects of informal structures on formal systems.

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Furthermore, I am profoundly indebted to my mother, Rebecca, and my wife, Shiella, whose constant encouragement has been a source of strength throughout this intellectual journey. Their unwavering belief in my pursuits has sustained me, enabling me to see this research project through to its successful conclusion. I also wish to acknowledge my sisters-in-law—Edith, Tariro, and Linda—and my brothers—Elvis, Tapson Junior, Tanyaradzwa, and Tinashe—for their steadfast support. Additionally, my aunt Carol and uncle Patrick have played critical roles in fostering my educational ambitions, their encouragement serving as a reminder of the familial ties that weave through the tapestry of knowledge.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the City Council for approving this study, as well as to all research participants, whose contributions have been invaluable in enriching the dialogue surrounding this subject. This collective support has not only facilitated the completion of this project but has also illuminated the essential interconnectedness of community and scholarship, a theme that resonates deeply within the fabric of academic inquiry.

DEDICATION

I am profoundly honoured to dedicate this scholarly pursuit to two extraordinary women who have been pivotal in shaping both my personal and academic journey: my beloved wife, Shiela Kadakure, and my cherished mother, Rebecca Kadakure. Their unwavering encouragement has served as a formidable foundation for my intellectual aspirations.

The steadfast support embodies a deeper philosophical commitment to the values of love, sacrifice, and resilience. Shiela's kind prayers have illuminated moments of doubt and uncertainty, infusing my endeavours with renewed vigour and purpose. Rebecca's extraordinary patience has offered a sanctuary of understanding, allowing me to navigate the complexities of academia without losing sight of the personal virtues that underpin meaningful scholarship.

Their influence extends beyond emotional support; it operates at a fundamental level, instilling in me a profound sense of responsibility and dedication. The remarkable intersection of their encouragement and my academic pursuits serves as a testament to the essential role that familial bonds play in the pursuit of knowledge. I deeply appreciate their unwavering love and support, which have been instrumental in my journey toward intellectual growth and personal fulfilment.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Change Management	Change management is the process of moving people, groups and organisations from an existing state to a future state, with the goal of ensuring that changes are implemented smoothly and yield lasting benefits (Kumarasinghe and Dilan, 2018)
Informal Structures	Unofficial organisational hierarchies, or structures of an informal nature, are characterised by the development of relationships and networks among individuals within an organisation that have an impact on communication, collaboration, and decision-making (Makena, Mudeje Buya & Kibui, 2023)
Iceberg Systems Theory	To understand intricate systems, Iceberg Systems Theory suggests that a small portion of the system is visible above the surface, while most of its underlying structures, patterns, and influences are hidden below (Xian, Huang & Cheng, 2022)
New Public Administration	New Public Administration is a system that prioritises social equity, citizen engagement, and the need for public services to be responsive to the community (Eppel & Rhodes, 2018)
Public Administration	Government policy, programs and services that are designed to serve the people effectively and fairly in public administration (Muronda & van der Waldt, 2023)
Strategic Management	The purpose of strategic management is to plan, supervise and evaluate the objectives of an organisation (Kamaldeen, 2024)
Systems Thinking	Systems thinking is a holistic approach that considers the complexity of interrelated relationships and dynamics (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2023)

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The chapter provides a background of the study and a summary of the research gap, illuminates the research problem and systematically explores the significance of the study. The chapter underscores the contribution to the body of knowledge presented by the study. A brief context of the elected organisation is given, leading to the study objectives, research questions and underpinning theory. The chapter concludes by exploring the research design, ethical considerations, delineation and limitations of the study.

1.1.1 Background to the study

Public Administration is a multidimensional discipline that taps from governance, sociology, psychology, political science and organisational studies. However, theories used to explore Public Administration are increasingly becoming redundant, as argued by Eggins (1995), Rutgers (1998) and Lynn (2008) in Van der Waldt (2017). To compound this deficiency, Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar (2021) contend that limited studies in Public Administration address the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategic management.

More importantly, strategic management studies in the public sector are inclined towards exploring the impact of social communication networks because networked employees tend to be more productive (Whetsell, Kroll & Dehart-Davis, 2021). According to Thapa (2020) there is a need to establish a cumulative body of knowledge in this emerging multi-disciplinary social science field (public administration). Strategic management is driven by a functional organisational structure, cohesive organisational culture, transparent leadership and clear corporate governance processes (Bonnici, 2015). The role of informal structures in the structural integrity and effective implementation of corporate governance has become critical (Haber, 2014). Based on the earlier articulated premise, the study focuses on the strategic role of the informal structures regarding the implementation of strategic management in the public sector.

Precisely, the public sector is inundated with a divergence of activities which include lobbying, political canvassing and positioning (Pernegger, 2020). The study selected the Gweru, Zimbabwe local authority as the organisation to abstract data. The study further explored the absolute power that the minister of local government yields over the local authority and how this power subsequently impacts the activities of the informal structure and the implementation of strategic management within the organisation.

More importantly, the minister can impose ministerial instructions through section 315 of the Urban Councils Act or rescind Council decisions through section 314 of the same Act. In addition, the minister can unilaterally appoint the local governing authority through section 132 of Amendment 1 of the Urban Councils Act of 2008 (Marumahoko *et al.*, 2020). As presented by Chigwata, Marumahoko and Madhekeni (2019), in Marumahoko *et al.* (2020). The political complex in Zimbabwe makes the study an interesting area of focus.

Review of management scholarship reveals that informal structures have emerged as a critical stakeholder in the implementation of strategic management within organisations (Haber, 2014). Interestingly Whetsell, Kroll and Dehart-davis (2021) contend that public administration has many bureaucratic layers that influence the behaviour of informal structures within the organisation. Furthermore, Moynihan and Pandey (2008), Nisar and Maroulis (2017), Siciliano (2015), in Whetsell, Kroll and Dehart-davis (2021) reveals that public administration focuses on communication networks within public-run institutions. This focus could have been driven by the fact that the public sector has numerous bureaucratic layers and red tape that impede efficient and timely dissemination of information, thereby justifying the emergence of informal structures as communication and strategy catalysts within the organisation.

1.1.2 Summary of Research Gap

The study explores the strategic role played by the informal structure in implementing corporate strategy in the public sector. The body of knowledge has limited literature that addresses corporate strategy and informal structures from the public administration perspective. Most literature on corporate strategy is abstracted from the private sector enterprises, and limited attention has been given to the complex structural design of the public sector, which has salient visibility of informal structures.

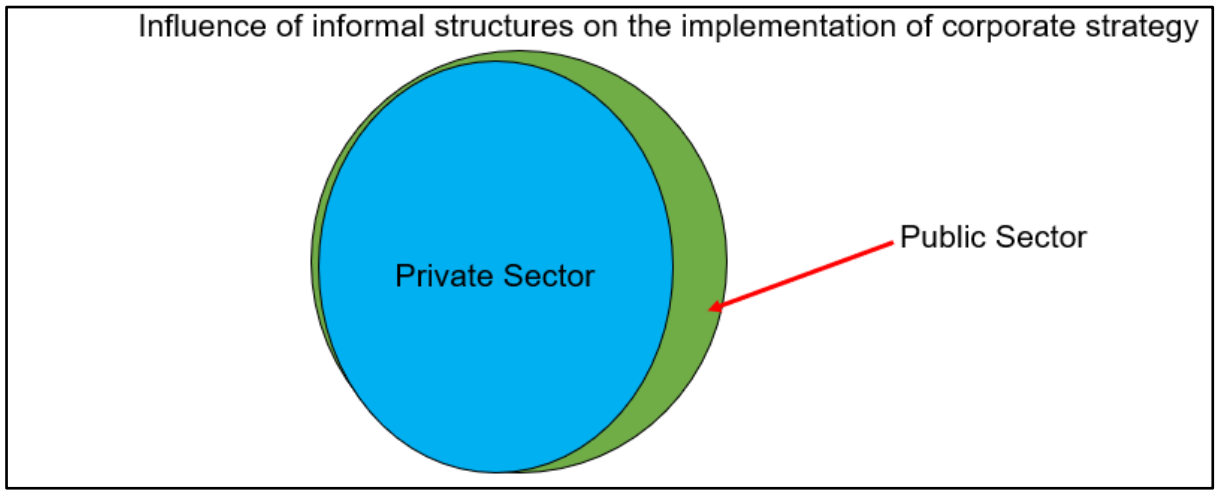

Figure 1.1: Public Administration Informal Structure Research Gap

The research gap is not as a result of the total absence of research pertaining to corporate strategy in the public sector domain, instead the research gap is hinged on the limited studies that have explored corporate strategy in the public sector.

1.2 Research Problem

This study is a deeper analysis of informal structures and strategic management pursuant to an earlier study that investigated the implementation of corporate strategy in a mining organisation in the Northern Cape. The current research investigates similar social antecedents established by the first study, like fragmentation, cultural divergence and bickering, that affect informal structures in the Gweru, Zimbabwe Municipality. The study questions the notion of power, political influence and entrenched social habits embedded in informal structures and how they affect the implementation of strategic management within the organisation. A comparative analysis of the findings from a mining organisation and an organisation in the public sector reveals underlying social contextual factors that deepen our understanding of strategic management and informal structures. The comparative analysis of the two studies reveals how the construct of social context and location shapes the behaviour of employees. Most studies in public administration overlook the concept of informal structure, yielding a shallow appreciation of legitimate and charismatic power within the public sector, which is composed of numerous multi-structures that are governed by legal rules. This reality makes the public sector a complex area of study. Given the emergence of a new public administration perspective and the social context aspect, it is imperative to rethink or reimagine how informal structures affect and are affected by evolving transitional public sector goals. The study utilises systems thinking to explore how contemporary organisational change and transition relate to the adaptability of strategic management and informal structures.

1.2.1 Significance of the Study

The study attempts to carry out a cross-contextual comparison with the findings of the former with a view to critically exploring the underlying social concepts of social context, location, political context and cultural divergence. Reviewed literature indicates that there is limited scholarship around the application of theory in public administration research. More importantly Van der Waldt (2017), drawing from Wessels (2008), Cameron (2013) argues that numerous studies in public administration lack methodological and theoretical rigour. The research seeks to respond to claims by scholars that public administration has a porous methodological and theoretical approach by applying the iceberg systems theory.

1.3 Summary of the contribution to the body of knowledge

Baptista *et al.* (2015) asserts that doctoral studies should make logical or novel contributions that are meaningful scientific contributions to the body of knowledge. To bridge the identified gap regarding the lack of theoretical and methodological rigour in public administration studies, the research utilised the systems theory Iceberg model as a theoretical lens to conceptualise the research problem (Woermann, Human & Preiser, 2018). The study further investigates the impact of normative influences on the selected organisation's informal structures and corporate strategy.

1.4 Context of the selected Organisation

The study draws samples from the City of Gweru (CoG), Zimbabwe, which employs 1146 people. The sample consists of 60 research participants from four different departments. The departments interviewed were human resources, public works, finance, and housing. The sample is composed of 20 general employees, 20 middle management and 20 senior managers. Fu et al. (2019) assert that a review of 560 qualitative studies revealed a mean sample size of 31, therefore, a sample size of 60 should be acceptable.

Table 1.1: Sample Distribution

Departments of CoG	General Employees	Middle Managers	Senior Managers	Total
Human Resources	5	5	5	15
Public Works	5	5	5	15
Housing	5	5	5	15
Finance	5	5	5	15
Total	20	20	20	60

Below is a map of Gweru, the third-largest city in Zimbabwe. The map shows the metropolitan area covered by the Gweru local authority.

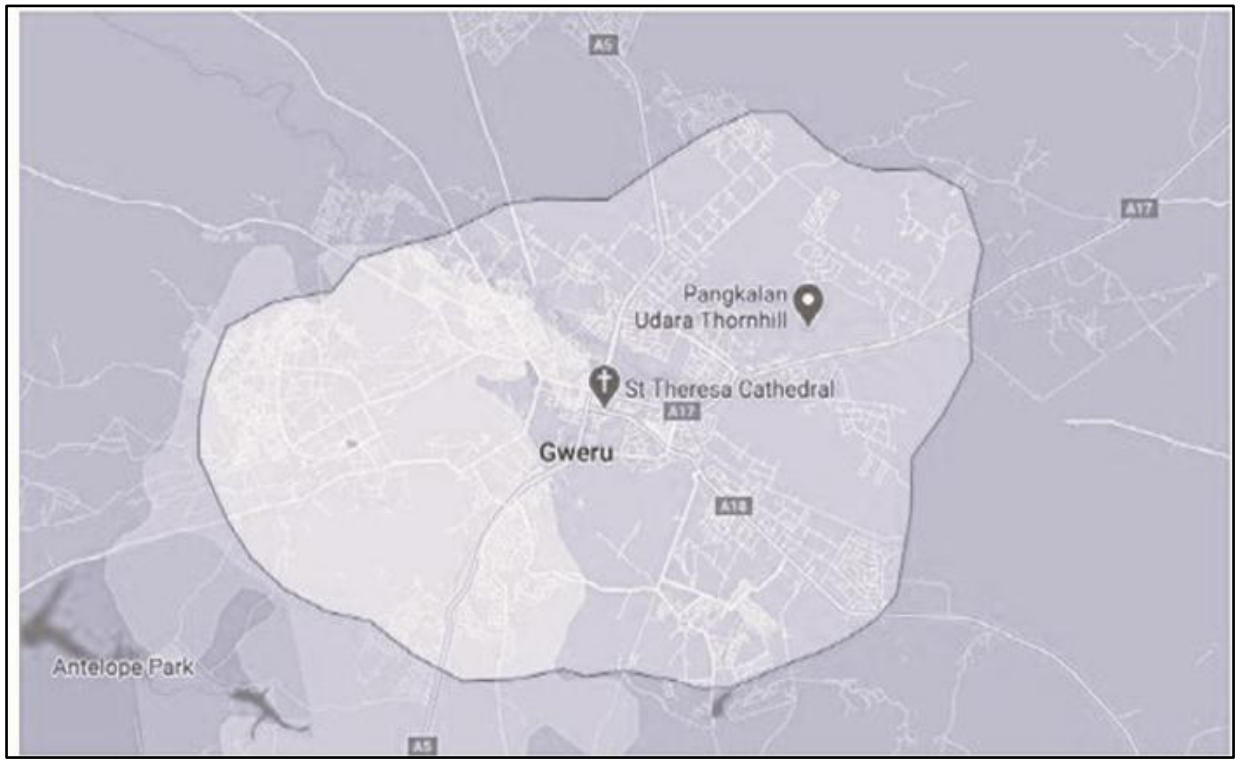

Figure 1.2: Gweru Map (Source: Google Maps, 2023)

1.4.1 Context of organisations in the previous study

The study focused on a single case study of a mining organisation with a branch in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. Because the mining industry is sensitive and closed off, the organisation is referred to as Organisation X. The Northern Cape branch employs over 800 people, mostly from the local Tswana and Afrikaner communities, along with regional labour immigrants. The province recognises four official languages: Tswana, Afrikaans, Xhosa, and English. These languages contribute to various informal structures within the organisation. Organisation X also hires many international and regional immigrants who see Northern Cape as a relatively peaceful area.

1.4.2 The reason for selecting the current case study

This study aims to build a strong understanding by using a mixed-method approach that utilises an exploratory sequential research design and cross-contextual analysis method. It compares findings from the Northern Cape, South Africa, with those from the Gweru municipality in Zimbabwe. Drawing from Donkoh and Mensah (2023) explanation of cross-contextual analysis: the two different contexts highlight the complex nature of informal structures and corporate strategy in various sociopolitical settings. By carrying out a cross-contextual analysis, the research aims to go beyond the limits of studying just one context, leading to a fuller picture of the issues being examined.

The research is informed by Lester, Cho and Lochmiller (2020) is based on the idea that different theoretical views can lead to different interpretations of social concepts, but they can also provide similar insights. Therefore, the study looks at whether the different contexts might show similar results, which could either support or challenge existing ideas and knowledge in the field. By considering both local and broader theoretical perspectives, the research not only improves its methods but also adds to the ongoing discussion in public administration studies.

Additionally drawing from Noble, Noble and Heale (2019) a comparative analysis of two distinct geographic and cultural areas may reveal universal principles about informal structures in the public sector organisations. The study aims to enrich the academic discourse by combining insights from both locations, thereby expanding the conversation of informal structures and strategic management. Ultimately, the study hopes to lay a solid foundation for future studies on how different contexts affect strategic management and informal structures.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The study's main objective is to investigate the influence of informal structures on the implementation of corporate strategy in the public sector. To be able to address the main objective of the study, the study will consider the following objectives:

1. To investigate informal structures and their influence on the implementation of corporate strategy in the public sector of a selected organisation.
2. To determine the covert and embedded traits that may lead to contention between informal structures and corporate strategy in the selected organisation.
3. To develop a general framework that may contribute to managing informal structures in the public sector.

1.5.1 Research questions

To be able to address the research objectives, the study considers the main research question to be:
How does the public sector of a selected organisation in Zimbabwe manage corporate informal structures?
To further understand how the public sector is managing informal structures, the study proposes the following sub-questions:

1. **Sub Question 1:** How are informal structures influencing the implementation of strategic management in a selected organisation in the public sector?

2. **Sub Question 2:** How have the covert and embedded traits led to contention between informal structures and corporate strategy?
3. **Sub Question 3:** What general guidelines may contribute to managing informal structures in the public sector?

1.6 Underpinning Theory: Iceberg Systems Theory

According to Xian, Huang and Cheng (2022); Reed and Langford (2021), the Iceberg systems theory is a theoretical lens that shows that organisational systems conceal inherent social norms, values and embedded structures underneath the surface, with a tiny percentage of the covert social antecedents being visible at the top. The Iceberg model is a theoretical lens that illuminates complex, hidden social narratives that are essential in influencing employees' social behaviour and performance (Xiong, 2023). Furthermore, Mclean *et al.*, (2019), emphasise that focusing on clearly discernible manifestations of social behaviour of employees may lead to a superficial conclusion due to the underlying social normative values. Additionally, Nikiforova (2022) contend that systems thinking emphasises the interdependencies between various system components, showing that modifications in one area influence the other parts of the system.

1.6.1 Application of Systems thinking to social research

According to Alford et al. (2024), systems thinking can facilitate a holistic understanding of social systems and how the interdependence of these social systems has become increasingly relevant in social research. Cabrera, Colosi and Lobdell (2008) state that systems thinking gives researchers a better opportunity to establish covert issues that cannot be seen but cause the surface symptoms than when they strictly apply the symptoms only. When evaluating the impact of social interventions, as one of the examples, Miranda-Guerra et al. (2024) emphasise that systems thinking helps research feedback loops and emergent behaviours within communities with ease. This perspective is a construct in such fields as the public sector, where, through the hindsight of social determinants interaction, superior policies may be developed. Moreover, the integration of the concepts of such fields as sociology, psychology, and environmental studies by using systems thinking results in interdisciplinary collaboration and more profound analyses (Arnold, Kleve & Pieper, 2024). Based on the premise that longer-term consequences of social changes should be taken into account, systems thinking promotes agility; thus, scholars argue that due to its methodology, the outcome is a more sustainable solution.

In addition, Bozkurt and Bozkurt (2024) state that systems thinking can enhance participatory methods in social research by facilitating the impression of knowledge and possession by

involving stakeholders in the modelling process. It is important to embrace systems thinking in research approaches in order to develop all-inclusive and effective solutions as social issues become complex. Schematic representation of the concepts above can be seen in Figure 1.3.

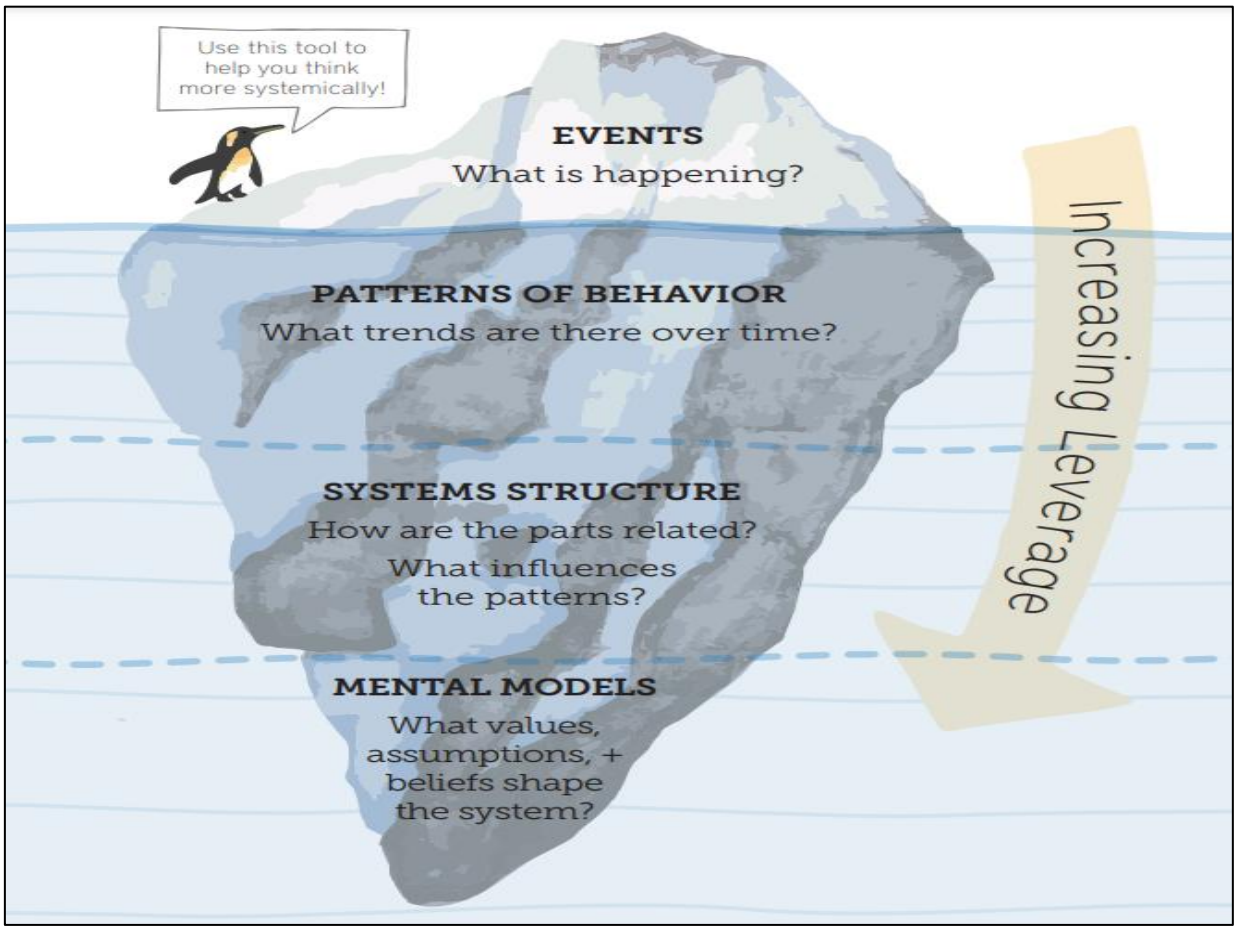

Figure 1.3: The systems Iceberg (Meadows, 1994)

1.7 Research Design

The study mainly employs case study and observation as a research design because the case study approach allows in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in real-life settings (Crowe, Cresswe, Robertson, Huby, Avery & Sheikh., 2011; Starman, 2013). This kind of approach allowed the study to gather more precise insights that may contribute to new theories. The study employs non-participant observation as a research design because it permits researchers to study people in their native environment, and therefore, a considerable context of the phenomenon can be noted.

1.8 Delineation

The study covered departments within the Gweru Metropolitan City Council. The city is located 277km from the capital city, Harare. Gweru is found in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe. The research is limited to 4 departments within the selected organisation to avoid broad generalisations that are drawn from quantitative studies (Mohajan, 2020).

1.9 Ethical consideration

Given the work of Mirza, Bellalem and Mirza (2023) on ethical implications of scientific research, this study was founded on ethical practices that preserved the university's integrity throughout the study while respecting the rights and privacy of research participants and other researchers. In pursuance of the above-stated ethical consideration, the study did not reveal the identity of research participants, ask questions with racial innuendo or bring the university's name into disrepute. The study sought consent, ensured voluntary participation and allowed the research participants to withdraw at anytime. Further, the study did not induce research participants by giving them benefits for participating in the research.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL LENS AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction to Systems Thinking

In the first chapter, a brief introduction and background, including the justification of the study, the knowledge gap and a summary of the contribution to the body of knowledge, was given. In this chapter, the theoretical lens and the contextual framework are discussed in order to provide a conceptual framework that dovetails the academic enquiry. A conceptual framework is also an essential part of research because, as Adom, Hussain and Joe (2018); Bless (2021); Kandiero, Bigirimana and Chiswina (2023) observe, a conceptual framework is a robust and clear framework that is utilised to comprehend, examine and interpret a research phenomenon. A conceptual framework is also a guideline that provides clarification of the major key concepts, variables or relationships being researched. It effectively offers a systematic mechanism for establishing gaps in the current knowledge and it also offers a grounded basis to construct new theories or to extend the modern ones. More significantly, the conceptual framework is important in this analysis since it entails the application of an Iceberg systems theoretical framework, which concerns the unravelling of underlying social antecedents, as suggested by Joseph-Goteiner and Fligstein, (2021).

2.2 Theoretical framework: Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is no longer a thinking approach concerned with research in biological and physical sciences; it has become an interdisciplinary approach key to foundational comprehension of many disciplines. Harney (2020) notes that systems thinking has characteristics that align with general sciences with a heavy leaning on political science, economics, and psychology. Moreover, Drakopoulos and Katselidis (2017) mention that political science follows the rule-based systems, whereas the economics approach follows systems of demand, distribution, production and consumption. The study subscribes to the assumption of industrial psychology that holds that the behaviour of the employees is a direct effect of the social structures or social situation in the organisation. According to Lai and Lin, (2017), systems theory can analytically examine organisations, groups and their components which compose a system.

The authors of Hilmersson et al., (2022) claim that modern organisations must deal with the issues rooted in social values and norms. Thinking is a critical aspect that has provided complex mechanisms on how different concepts, models, and theories exist in relation to the

behaviour and the social antecedents that produce it. Arnold and Wade (2015) also state that system theory is a central platform where complex ideas influence the observable behaviour of employees. Figure 2.1 below is a depiction of the Iceberg systems theory model.

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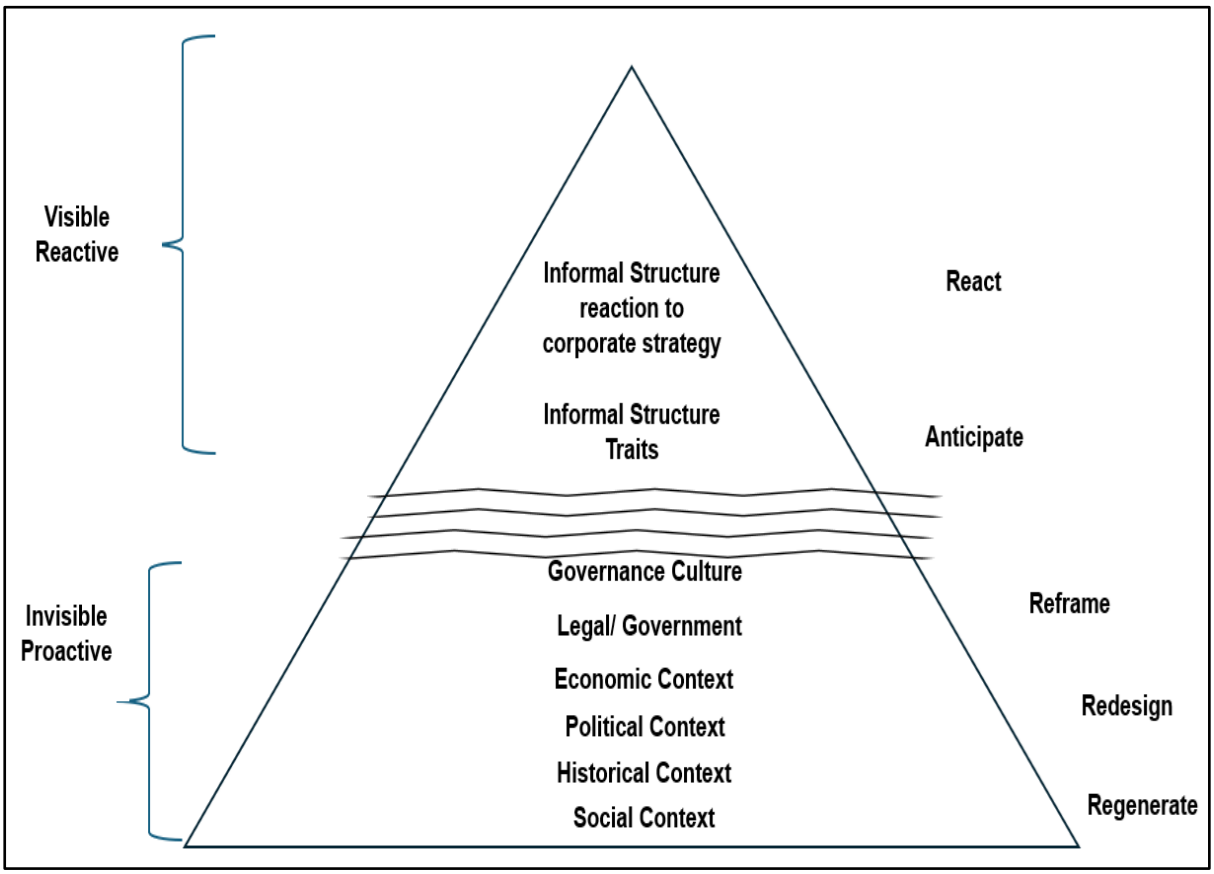

Figure 2.1: A systems thinking Iceberg Model (Adapted from: Bryan et al, 2006)

2.2.1 Systems Thinking and Qualitative Research

Voulvoulis et al. (2022) argue that systems thinking has emerged as a dominant tenable and appreciated conceptual foundation in qualitative research. Srivastava and Banarsi (2017) suggest that systems thinking acts as an ideal catalyst in conceptualising complex systems and in shedding light on how complex events are interconnected within organisational setups. Haines (2010) states that the idea of systems thinking goes back to that of an Austrian biologist called Ludwig von Bertalanffy, who massively contributed to the theoretical foundations of this theory in the 1940s. Bertalanffy posed the idea of the general systems theory, which concentrated on the relationship of units being interdependent and connected. The present study states that Lang et al. (2021), demonstrate that the systems approach is a conceptual framework in qualitative research. As pointed out by Nikiforova (2022), one of the most significant authors in the rise of systems thinking. More importantly, systems thinking broadly

draws from the work done by West Churchman in the 1960s and 1970s, which was mainly concerned with the implementation of systems thinking to social and organisational processes. He (Nikiforova,2022) emphasised the importance of considering a system as a whole and not as a set of fragmented parts. It is a perspective that has helped consolidate systems thinking as a theoretical basis in conceptualising complex social problems.

Costa, Diehl and Snelders (2019) argue that by using the conceptual model of systems thinking, relationships and behavioural patterns inside an organisation can be examined in great detail. Rjo et al. (2022); Nikiforova, (2022) concur that the systems thinking framework would be a strategic research tool because it helps in revealing the underlying and covert dynamics in the social world, which may not be visible at the earlier stages of the research exercise. This philosophy then enables the researcher to cast a wider net in terms of knowledge, and this aspect makes the research process diverse.

According to Cabrera and Cabrera (2023), systems thinking characterises the situation or the surrounding social conditions in which a system is located, and it opens up to a more comprehensive perspective of a phenomenon under investigation. Palmer (2022) asserts that Gregory Bateson was an anthropologist and social scientist who used systems thinking in his analysis of communication and cybernetics. His application (Gregory Bateson) revealed the relevance of the social atmosphere and a social influence in the modelling of social engagement and relations among people. His contribution has made it possible to analyse complex systems in a grounded manner.

2.2.2 Challenges of applying Systems Thinking to qualitative research

Boswell, Baird and Taheem (2021) point out that besides the above-mentioned benefits that can be achieved through the use of systems thinking as a conceptual framework in qualitative research, the method also has its drawbacks. The above three argue that the systems approach is generally cryptic and incomprehensible in practice. The strategy can make it difficult to detect relationships, resulting in superficial analysis and inconclusive results. More so, systems thinking involves thinking holistically and this might prove to be cumbersome and tedious to some.

Moreover, O Donnell (2023) argues that systems thinking emerged as a comprehensive conceptual approach to the study of complex systems in the qualitative research domain. Researchers have reported the limitations involved in the use of the systems thinking

conceptual framework as applicable in qualitative research; however, it is a widely used and popular theoretical approach.

2.2.3 Other forms of systems theory

Interestingly, Bayne and Saad (2018), show that the complex adaptive systems theory explores how organisations accommodate human beings in the concept of change as well as how organisations respond to change in line with the changing environment. CAS theoretical premises define systems thinking as flexible and as an adaptive theoretical lens used to conceptualise the nonlinear events of life. More importantly, as components of the systems thinking, Self-organisation and co-evolution provide a transitional mechanism for comprehending irrational patterns of life and social existence.

Suoheimo, Vasques and Rytilahti (2020) explain that the Iceberg model is a significant structure illustrating that the visible part of the behaviour of the employees might depend on underlying social norms and values. The model provides a detailed and deep review of the hidden roots of dynamics that are deeply rooted in social norms and values. Furthermore, the Iceberg model establishes a coherent thought process that enables a holistic comprehension of the entire system. Hald and Spring (2023) consider the Actor Network Theory (ANT) to be a theory that provides an analysis of the connection between human and non-human actors within a system. On a certain level of truth, this concept of theoretical framework examines the way people acknowledge agency and power in the system by considering human actors, non-human actors and technology as active entities in a system. This methodology raises the perspective of being concerned with the duality of the traditional logic and allows a more cryptologic approach to complex systems. This approach facilitates adaptability and will help in making sense of complexity and vague aspects of organisational social systems.

According to Knight (2024), biophysical systems theory streamlines the interaction of living things and their surrounding environment. It is a mixed product of ecological concepts and biological ones. The connection between the two disciplines adds the socio-ecological storyline to explain social relationships at the organisational level.

Moreover, Arnold and Wade (2017) contend that systems thinking is an ordinary feature that manages interrelated influences in social networks of organisations. The systems approach facilitates the emergence of a systematic way of analysing organisational behaviour and the notion of strategic decisions in the organisation by incorporating the emotional, cultural and contextual implications involved in these given issues.

Briefly, the identified body of literature suggests that context, complexity and interconnectedness are some of the central pillars that support systems thinking in an organisational context. The ideas that were borne out of this section offer a viable and well-structured framework through which one can have an informed dialogue concerning the principles of organisational change and adaptation.

2.2.4 Relevance of Systems Thinking and the Iceberg Model to the Study

Systems thinking is composed of interdisciplinary fields and contexts, as argued by Harney (2020). The social groups and social contextual environment that influence the behaviour of employees within the organisation are regarded as social systems, as presented by Scott (2022). It is imperative to note that these social systems are affected and influenced by multiple contextual factors like geographic setting, language, religion, beliefs and cultural divergence (Luk & Grundy, 2023). The study zeroed in on the social context to create a broader appreciation of the application of systems thinking. Generalised strategies like systems thinking have the capacity to dissect factors that underpin social systems by revealing insightful solutions to complex problems where cause and effect are not immediately apparent.

Systems thinking has become a commonly accepted framework in conceptualising research in fields like business, public policy, health, natural resource management and anthropology. Arnold and Wade (2015) argue that the core focus of systems thinking is founded on the premise of interrelationships and a holistic approach. The Zimbabwean context comprises multiple layers that influence employee behaviour within organisations. To develop a comprehensive theoretical framework, it is imperative to examine contextual factors impacting perception and behaviour (Adom, Hussain and Joe, 2018). The study analysed the following contextual factors that underpin the social system within the Zimbabwean context.

- Political System
- Legal framework and the Public sector
- Economic system

2.3 Social Context

Describing the country as a disjointed and highly polarised social order, Chigora (2018), with references to Makumbe (2002), Mashingaidse (2006), and Masunungure (2009 points out that the divisive politics has become corrosive and has turned the nation against itself and at the same time divided the workforce. The public sector has its own share of problems that include inadequate resources, political instability, governance strains and transparency problems. The

difference in cultures that is represented by the various ethnic groups and languages affects the social aspects of the processes within the public sector to a significant degree (Maseko & Dhlamini, 2020). Furthermore, Betts (2019) explains that the colonial past and the fight for independence have made a lasting mark on the social fabric of the country.

The past alluded to above has further shaped the functioning of the processes and interactions of the public sector. Zimbabwe is a country with a wealth of cultural heritage that comprises numerous traditional beliefs and practices that have an overwhelming impact on societal interactions. A clear picture of how these cultural rules are to be followed and held in the highest regard, in order to bring positive results concerning governance and the delivery of services to other people. The current social situation in the Zimbabwean community is rather complex and influenced by the interrelation of the past, politics, economy, and culture. Such aspects greatly influence the operations and performance of state institutions within the country and, therefore, define the delivery of services and implementation of governance. Mapfumo and Mutereko (2020) further state that the historical, political and cultural factors have an impact on the social systems that exist in the public sector in Zimbabwe and determine the relationships and interactions with the varied stakeholders. The poor relationship between the citizens and the government is one of the main aspects that exists in social systems in the Zimbabwean public sector. Moreover, according to Chigudu (2014), citizen participation and involvement in decision-making in the public sector are important. More importantly, Yeboah-Assiamah et al. (2016) posit that an effective social system promotes government institutions' transparency, accountability and responsiveness that will culminate in the effective delivery of the same to their citizens and effective governance.

Muchadenyika (2017) also explains that the civil society, consisting of heterogeneous stakeholders and a diverse social background, needs strong social justice advocacy. The research conducted by Muchadenyika and Williams (2017) demonstrates that trends in the world economic agreements and governmental relief programs are the most crucial factors that determine the opportunities and challenges in the sector. Ramalobe (2023) and Chigwata (2016) address the necessity to introduce the traditional systems of leadership in the public sector, something that cannot be beneficial without a comprehensive strategy to reveal the various social orders that the public sector in Zimbabwe relies on. Such social systems consist of relationships between government agencies, civil society, citizens and the donor community of Zimbabwe.

The historical, political, cultural and international social factors have been the key engines that have defined the complex governance and municipal service delivery story of Zimbabwe or

the governing abilities of the country in the context of social systems mentioned above. Evaluation and appreciation of these social systems help the scholars, policy makers and citizens to develop the foundation of an advanced political and socio-economic order that will foster responsive local government. According to Koenane (2018), combining traditional monarchical lineage-driven governance with a modern system of governance is quite difficult, as these two systems have differences in their perception of democracy and social justice.

2.3.1 Historical Context of Zimbabwe and Its Impact

Maunganidze (2017) highlights the fact that the current government has cloned the oppressive government political and legal frameworks that were used by the colonialists, which give rise to limited democratic freedom. It is argued that the same oppressive political and legal frameworks have cascaded down to the local government systems, as argued by Dibaba (2016). The colonial administration introduced a hierarchical system of governance based on the subjugation of the local population.

Nyikadzino and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022) contend that the greatest evil of the colonial system was the establishment of a centralised despotic government system. This system established a subordinate mindset in the citizens of Zimbabwe, which has become an unwritten legacy of government to date. Asuelime and Asuelime (2022) contend that the notion of a centralised government is premised on the need to self-preserve as opposed to nation-building. The colonial approach disrupted the traditional dynastic power dispensation, leaving the colonial government as the only legitimate government framework that should be utilised to define democracy, authority and power within the governance of Zimbabwe. Furthermore, Dzimiri (2021) attributes the failure of the local government decentralisation drive to the central government because of the inherent need to maintain a grip on power. Regrettably, the legacy of colonial rule and practice in Zimbabwe has immensely contributed to the national and local governance practices. This enduring mindset of centralised governance has established an entrenched practice of how power, authority and governance are perceived in Zimbabwe, even after the colonial regime.

2.3.2 Political Context

Chikwanha-Dzenga et al. (2018) claim that the political institutions and the public organisation in Zimbabwe face significant threatening conditions that influence governance and service provision. The presence of certain threatening conditions in the political arena reflects issues connected with the electoral process, the transformation of political polarisation, and the

necessity of increasing democratic governance. There have been concerns related to the holding of elections and to the democratic space in the country as a whole.

Gwiza & Jarbandhan (2022) reveal that the public sector of Zimbabwe has several challenges, which include service delivery, financial constraints, transparency and accountability. These challenges are manifest in the failure to provide basic needs like healthcare, education and infrastructure. Additionally, Chiweshe (2015) argues that numerous sources have exposed several incidents of corruption and mismanagement within the public sector, which have subsequently affected the capacity of the public sector to sufficiently provide basic needs to the citizens. Political polarisation and bickering are the main impediments to socioeconomic development within Zimbabwe. Betts (2019) further contends that polarisation emanated from historical, social and economic challenges arising from political actors. One of the foundational key factors that underpin political polarisation is the country's legacy of colonialism and the protracted struggle for independence. The fragmentation and polarisation that emerged during the struggle for independence have remained a permanent feature of the political landscape of Zimbabwe and have manifested themselves through various forms.

Makhudu, (2017) further argue that fragmentation was augmented by political rhetoric paddled by the ruling party, giving rise to ethnic tensions and competition for resources. LeBas and Munemo (2019) state that political leaders often use divisive language during election campaigns aimed at drawing support and maintaining a grip on power. This has created a highly toxic and politically charged environment, leading to confrontational politics instead of dialogue and compromise. Additionally, the visible divide between the rich and the poor has chronicled the irreconcilable levels of inequality, which have deepened the fragmentation of the Zimbabwean society (Tekwa and Adesina, 2018). The above-mentioned issues have created a conducive environment for political manipulation and polarisation, further solidifying the existing social fault lines. Furthermore, Bratton & Masunungure (2018) reveal that the lack of independent and unbiased media has acted as a catalyst in fragmenting and further dividing the citizens. Drawing from the aforementioned, it is apparent that this polarisation is evident in the political upheaval within the country, thereby justifying an inevitable need for reconciliation and political dialogue. More importantly, independent media creates a grounded basis for an informed and engaged citizenry.

In conclusion, Matingwina (2019) states that the political environment in Zimbabwe stems from a complex historical, social and economic foundation and many interventions are needed to deflate the negative hype in the political landscape. More importantly, some of those interventions include the promotion of the government of national unity and increased political

dialogue. By addressing the factors that underpin the political environment, the nation will transition into a more cohesive and modern developmental state(Marango *et al.*, 2020).

2.3.3 Legal/Governmental Context

Muronda and van der Waldt (2023) explain that the legal structure that informs how the administration of the public sector in Zimbabwe is executed plays a major part in supporting service delivery, governance, regulation and the driving force behind the overall operations in the public administration field. The legal framework has involved a few legislators that are meant to serve the purpose of good service delivery. Zimbabwe has a constitution adopted in 2013, which has a wide structure that governs the Zimbabwean parent sector. The functions and structure of the government and rights and obligations of the citizens are stipulated in the constitution, on the abilities and functions of the various government departments. The constitution is laid down on the basis of good governance, personal freedoms and openness.

2.3.4 Municipal Governance in Zimbabwe

Jonga (2014) suggests that the Zimbabwean municipal government is established according to Urban District Act Chapter 29:13 and Rural District Act Chapter 29:15. Based on the mentioned Acts, the Municipalities should assume a central position in the administrative structure of local Councils. Municipalities in Zimbabwe should also take a great role in local governance by offering proper service and infrastructure in urban and rural district Councils. Notwithstanding, as Chigwata et al., (2019) elaborate, Zimbabwean Municipalities fail to discharge their mandate in line with the provisions of the constitution in the country because the national politics is marred with intense political polarisation and bickering. The intrinsic feature of municipal governance in Zimbabwe is urban local government, as the central authority has the mandate of administration and urban governance. The Local Government Act defines the laws that govern municipal governance, the powers and functions of urban local authorities (Mapuva &Takabika, 2020). The municipalities in Zimbabwe are mandated with various duties to make municipal governance effective. Such responsibilities include urban planning, provision of water and sanitation, waste management, infrastructure development, housing programs and local economy development.

Policy Dialogue (2010) listed inherent dynamics of Municipal governance in Zimbabwe, and it is still apparent. It is paramount to validate the points raised by Dziva and Kabonga (2021) that alluded to the fact that Zimbabwe is still faced with a number of challenges that hinder the

effective process of service delivery and general urban growth. Some of these challenges include financial issues, which lead to inadequate infrastructure maintenance and provision of services. Furthermore, corruption, poor institutional capacity and skills of urban local bodies and political influence are some of the issues that bar the successful operations of urban local authorities. Also, Chirisa et al. (2016) assert that as a result of the swift urbanisation and population growth in Zimbabwe have created a severe burden upon the current municipal infrastructure and service delivery.

2.3.5 Economic Context

The manufacturing industry that once was a pivotal player in the growth of the economy has been thrown off track by a number of issues, including redundant infrastructure, energy shortages and inconsistent policies, according to the World Bank (2024). With their increasing ability to grow, the service sector (tourism and financial services) has been hit by issues affecting it, like political instability and an inflationary environment in Zimbabwe. The structure of the informal economy has mainly given a stronghold to the informal economy that has served the purpose of many people of the populace to earn their livelihood, particularly when the economy experienced decay and the surge of unemployment levels. However, Matsongoni and Mutambara (2021) state that the informal sector also introduced a significant level of difficulty in balancing it with regulation, taxation, and assimilation into the formal economy. Also, according to McIndoe-Calder (2017), Zimbabwe has had issues of hyperinflation and an unstable rate of currency that have pushed people to use various foreign currencies to conduct trade. Daka (2024) discloses the facts that just a few years ago, the government came up with another currency, Zig (digital currency), in a bid to regain control of monetary policy and as a move towards stabilisation of the economy. Zimbabwe is now struggling to restore its economy as well as diversify it to have sustainable growth and development. According to Chibango (2024), this will only need the solutions to be implemented on the structural matters related to investment, legal system, governance structure, and social engagement. In addition, the informal sector should be formalised by paying attention to small to medium enterprises. Finally, Tanyanyiwa et al. (2023) claim that I&I, the local government of Zimbabwe, lacks a complex system of laws to incorporate informal traders into the formal economy, and it lacks resources to develop the required infrastructure to accommodate the flow of informal traders doing business.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

As stated by Adom, Hussain and Joe (2018), a conceptual model represents the backbone of any particular research study, and defines its key elements on one hand and shows their interactions on the other. A conceptual framework demystifies and simplifies complex topics and helps the researcher to keep the work organised and circumvent extravagances and rumblings leading to clear comprehension of studied data, which provides reliability of findings.

Indeed, the model indicates that the psycho-social, the historical, and the political-administrative factors are the basis on which the behaviour exhibited by the employees in the public sector is manifested. More to the point, Blokland & Reniers (2015) believe that organisations and institutions are inclined to focus on the issues that are prevalent in society and neglect the sociological processes and factors that systematically lead to the emergence of problematic behaviour in the organisation. The right side of the model suggests that sociological narrative must be shifted to the informal structure in response to corporate strategy. Moreover, Celik (2023) argues that the Iceberg model enables the use of critical thinking and develops a diagnostic tool that can be employed to understand how the social and philosophical determinants underlying behaviour influence it.

According to Mensah et al., (2020), a conceptual model is used to connect several concepts and this is a progressive step in theory building. This will broaden perspective in studying a specific subject; a carefully developed conceptual model will act as a follow-up roadmap that will effectively convey the purpose of the study. The conceptual model serves as a tool that allows the readership to orient itself in the area of the intersection of theory and practice. In short, a conceptual model is a must in the research process as it guides a researcher, untangles the tangled web of ideas and illuminates the topical concepts of the subject both in theory and practice.

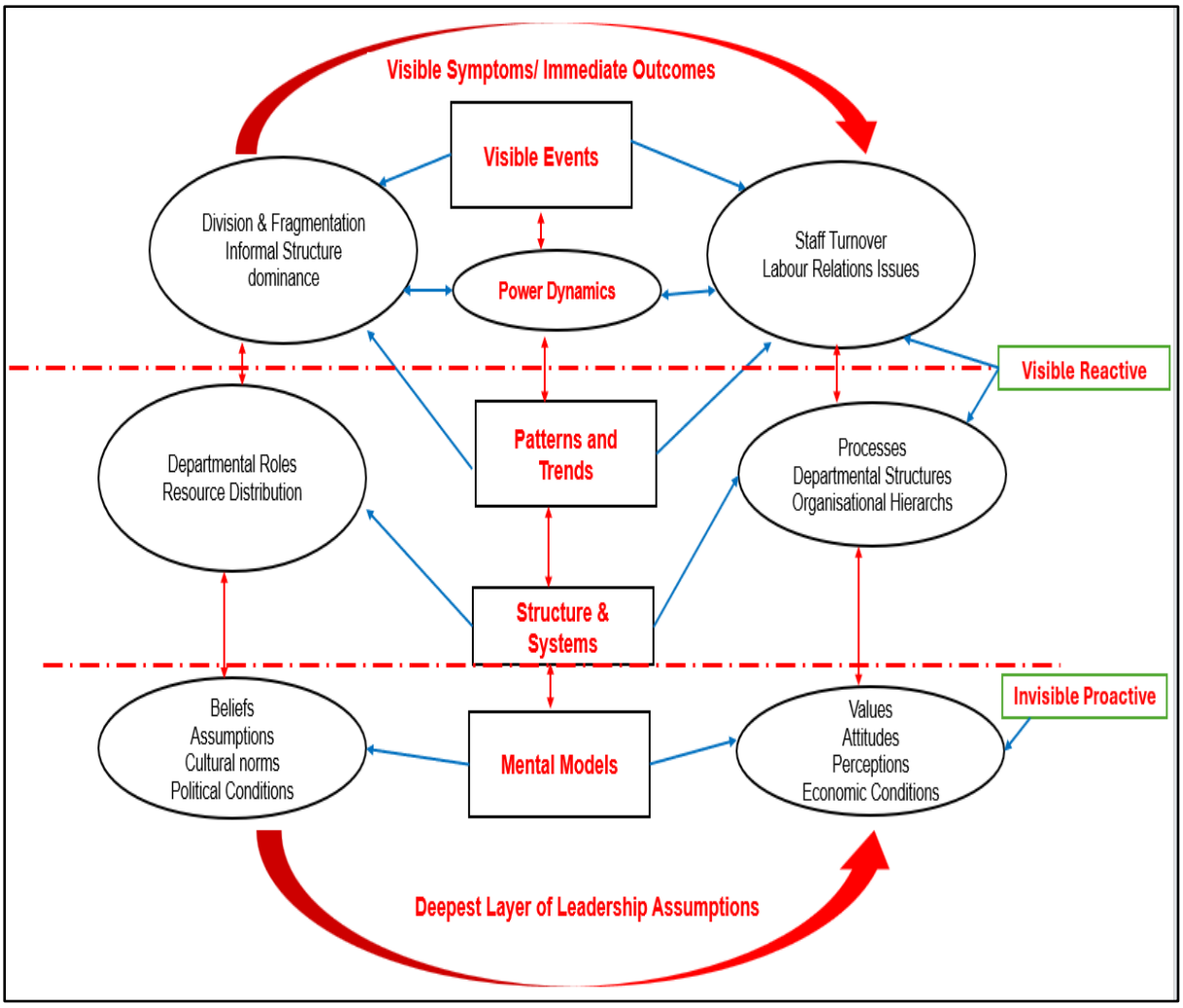

Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework

2.5 Summary of the Chapter

The chapter examines the theoretical and contextual concepts that guide the research study since a conceptual framework is required to guide the research. In the chapter, the importance of such a framework with regard to the need to make sense, assess and evaluate research subjects, develop important concepts, and identify the gaps in knowledge, is also identified. In the chapter, the universal application of systems thinking is analysed by its diverse tenets, through various fields or disciplines, which include political science, economics, and industrial psychology. The chapter proceeds to define systems thinking as a transdisciplinary approach that provides valuable tools in solving the complex issues that modern organisations are experiencing. It introduces some of the main premises and assumptions of systems theory that are helpful towards designing interventions in managing complex social dynamics in

organisations. More importantly, the chapter also states how systems thinking has evolved over the years, with its roots founded in the general systems theory established by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, which emphasises the interdependence of systems. It also presents the contribution of one sociologist, West Churchman, who placed much weight behind systems thinking in its broad-based perspective of tackling social complexities in organisations.

Generally speaking, the chapter introduces the use of systems thinking as a conceptual approach to qualitative research by exploring its background, key practitioners, and its applicability to offer a meaning to the complex social phenomenon.

CHAPTER 3: SURVEY OF RELEVANT SCHOLARSHIP

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the conceptual and theoretical basis of the research presented here. Furthermore, the previous chapter concluded by discussing a model adapted from the Iceberg systems theory. This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the historical development of public administration, providing valuable insights into Zimbabwe to enhance our understanding of the discipline's current challenges. It sheds light on how the evolution of Public Administration (PA) contributes to an accomplished understanding of the field. Additionally, it explores the New Public Administration (NPA) and its implications for the integrity of the public administration discipline. Through an in-depth review of the literature, the study establishes that while the historical progressions of public administration, as presented in the literature, make sense, there is evidence of a recurring identity crisis within the discipline. This crisis has significant implications for organisational studies scholars and public sector policymakers. Notably, the chapter highlights the contextual differences between developed and developing states regarding politics, society, and economics as an underlying and rarely addressed problem within public administration and organisational studies literature. Furthermore, the chapter reveals that the theoretical framework underpinning the development of public administration is likely to be transient due to the dynamic societal consciousness that shapes this discipline.

3.1.1 Prior Literature on Public Administration

The distinction between politics and public administration was discussed by Jana, Qualified and Mahavidyalaya (2021) and is grounded in the work of Wilson (1887) (Father of Public Administration). According to the trio, political science is associated with policy formulation whereas, public administration is primarily characterised by the implementation of a given policy. Nevertheless, according to Selepe and Mehlape (2023), the separation between the two, namely politics and public administration, is not that simple because it is formulated in theory. Besides, Scott and Wanna (2005) also argue that the history of public administration literature has a normative or prescriptive background that cannot bring more insight into this new area of study that has such a variety of topics. According to Raadschelders (1998), latter works on public administration describe the procedures and ways to handle the affairs of the crowd. Drawing from Joensuu and Niiranen (2018), Selepe and Mehlape (2023), it is clear that the model offered by Max Webber (1947) categorically speaks about thresholds of politics and

public administration. According to Weber (1996), the contributions that were made by White (1926) on the emergence of the discipline of public administration are noted to be poorly written and ignored in the body of knowledge. Nevertheless, Weber (1996) notes that the contributions by White (1922) led to the identification of major subject areas, i.e., the influence of the economy upon public administration and other situational matters (e.g., anthropological issues and the social networks on which the informal structures concept was derived from). This intellectual legacy can be very important to the general scenario of the discipline of public administration. According to the above position, public administration can transcend restrictions of systems and procedures. Similar to White (1926), Parlack and Caner (2021) tend to think that the study of public administration uniquely improves the demands of the state and its citizens as it rewards them with administrative powers of administrators who exercise the constitutional role of government.

3.1.2 Chronological development of Public Administration

Lamidi (2015) drawing from Bartholomew (1972), presents five critical stages of public administration development as stated below.

- Stage 1: politics administration dichotomy (1887-1926)
- Stage 2: principles of administration (1927-1937)
- Stage 3: era of challenge (1938-1947)
- Stage 4: crises of identity (1948-1970)
- Stage 5: public policy perspective (1971 onwards)

The initial stage indicates the noticeable relationship between politics and administration. Ongaro and Van Thiel (2017) present the argument that division of labour is one of the fundamental differences between political science and public administration. In addition, Ongaro and Van Thiel (2017) rely on Bauer (2008) and Whicker et al. (1993) to bring out the argument that the intra-organisational and procedural processes in public administration disclose the power and capacity of the state and that political science focuses on the greater societal contribution and policy-making processes. Ojogwu (2021) has included six elements of public administration in his second part of the principles of administration. Methods of co-operation

1. How workers are selected to do the job.
2. How workers are motivated or induced to put in their best
3. How the job is divided among the workers
4. How the workers are taught how to do the job
5. How the activities of various workers are coordinated.

With respect to the third transition, Serpa and Ferreira (2019) contend that the classical theories introduced a rigid mechanistic view of the organisation, which is often referred to as a bloodless organisation. The Neoclassical theories were heavily anchored on the social needs of employees and the behavioural science perspective of employees, and they introduced the notion of informal organisation, which was a clear break from the rigid boundaries set by the classical theories (Whetten, Rodgers & Kessler, 2015). Hafer (2016) drawing from the democratic and public value theory, laments that public administration is in a self-imposed identity crisis due to constant redefinition from dynamic public opinion. Commenting on the last transitional stage Martin and Hall (2021) anchor on Peters (2010), who posit that public policy perspectives are associated with what the government will directly do or achieve through its agents to better the lives of the citizens. Figure 3.1 displays the subsequent development of the five transitional stages of public administration.

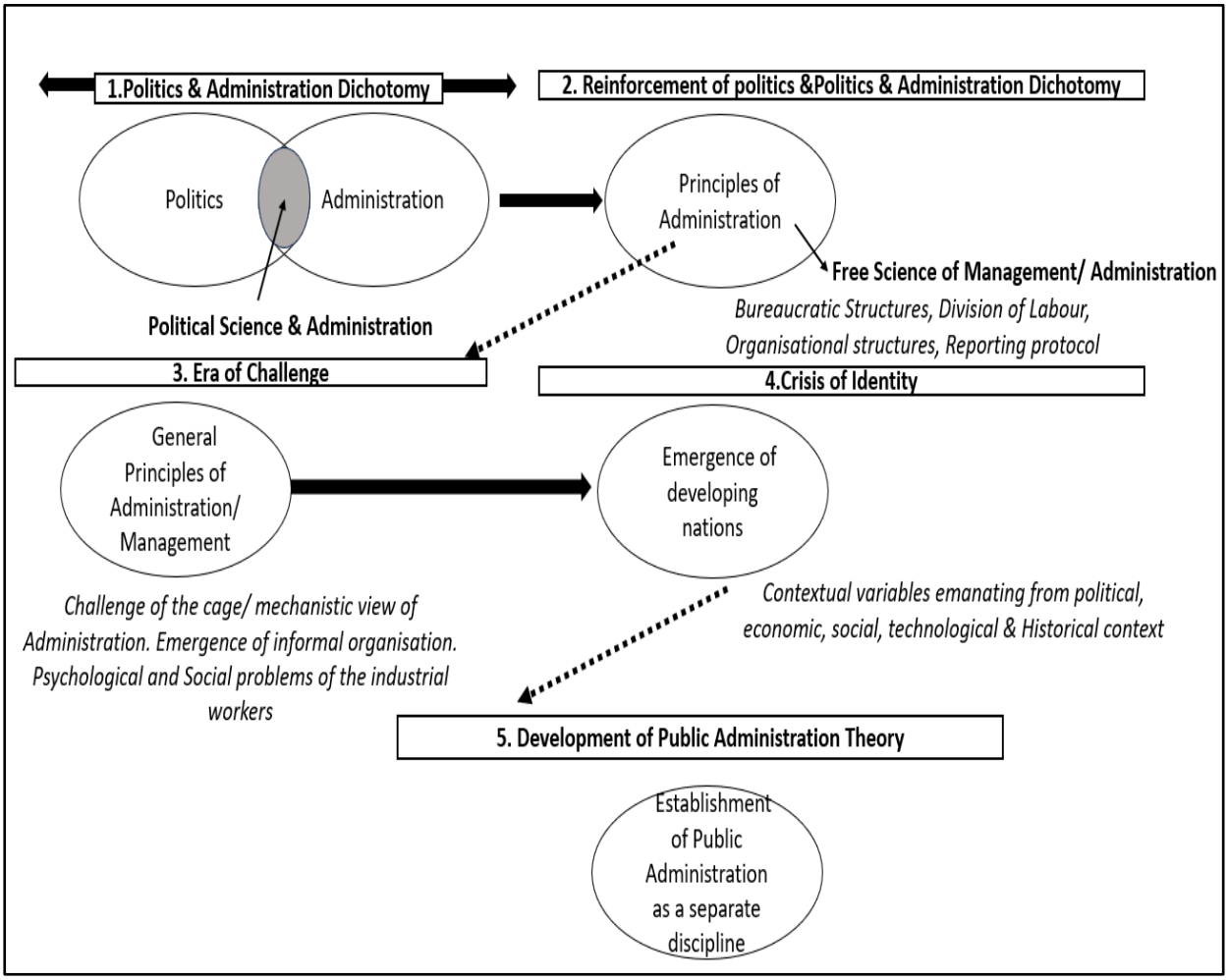

Figure 3.1: Transitional development of PA (Adapted from Ongaro & Van Thiel, 2017).

The five transitional phases of public administration present a plausible, subsequent and ubiquitous appreciation of public administration; however, stages 3 and 4 appear to be relevant in the contemporary development of public administration. Hafer (2016), drawing from the democratic and public value theory, argues that public administration is in the phase of an identity crisis due to the dynamic democratic values espoused by the public. More importantly, Lamidi (2015), drawing from Corson and Harris (1963), contends that the neo-classical theories unearthed the social and psychological needs of industrial workers between 1938 and 1947. The social and psychological needs of industrial workers or the public continue to shape the landscape of public administration since the premises of public administration are drawn from societal consciousness. Waldo (1994), as cited in Lamidi (2015), exposes the concept of the 'New Public Administration'(NPA) that emerged due to the redundancy of public administration theories that had previously not catered for the developing countries or countries that had been under colonialism. Indahsari and Raharja (2020) state that the NPA is results-driven as opposed to the traditional public administration, which is policy-driven. Furthermore, the NPA is founded on decentralised discretion, subcontracting and reorganisation of public administration. Indahsari and Raharja (2020) further state that public administration is a transitional discipline that borrows from various management disciplines. However, the NPA has not managed to be a panacea for the public administration conundrum as Essien (2015) argued that the African context is not sufficiently addressed by public administration as a discipline. The NPA adequately covers the developed states that have efficient administrative structures and policies.

Essien (2015) further, as demonstrated in the development of public administration, the major challenge with it is that it has no commonly accepted definition. Interestingly, public administration is both an occupation and a discipline that draws from multiple fields. Haque, van der Wal and van den Berg (2021) drawing from Drechsler (2013), Fitspatrick et al. (2011), Jreisat (2010), and Riggs (1964) underscores the contextual gap that emanates from the comparative public administration that ignores the notion of country-specific context. In the wake of environmental and contextual differences, it is critical to employ strategic management as a tool to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the alignment of the organisation to set objectives (Sourkouhi, 2013)The next section subsequently illuminates the gaps in the literature that are drawn from the development of public administration as a discipline.

3.1.3 Gaps drawn from the development of public administration literature.

Drawing from the development of public administration literature, the study proposes the following figure to mirror the intersection of key areas that are discussed exhaustively in Chapter 3. The key areas are derived from the historical development of public administration and interestingly, the brief literature review thus far points to the contemporary relevance of the archaic conceptual development of this field as illustrated in Figure 3.2 below.

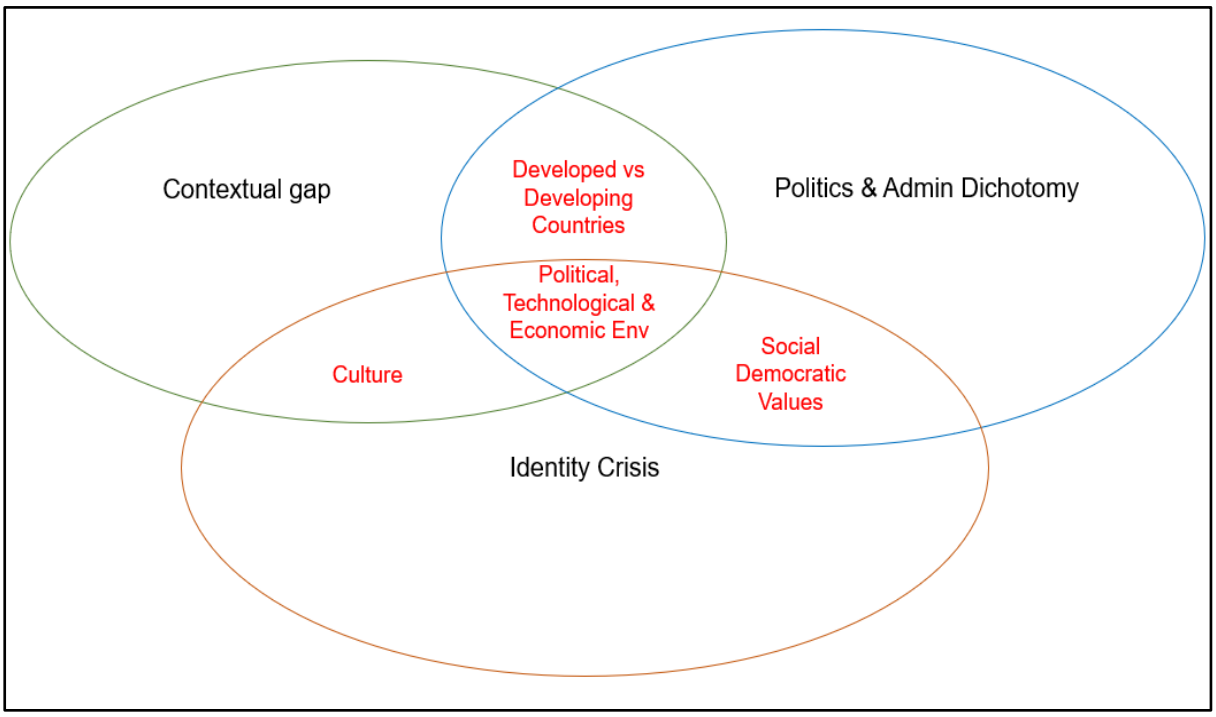

Figure 3.2: Intersection of development of public administration (researcher's own illustration)

3.1.4 Implications of public administration literature on organisational studies

Although there is considerable concentration on the aspect of NPA in the field of management and in business theories, this research emphasises the significance of the inherent problems in PA. Interestingly, Selepe and Mehlape (2023) seek to address the political and administrative puzzle as the greatest concern in the literature of the field of public administration. This is a clear indication that management is not a body of knowledge that evolves in a linear manner since the original challenges of this field continue to recur in one way or another. Despite the assumptions of some scholars stating that there is a balance between traditionalism and NPA, South Asian categorisation of PA in this region implies doubt and superficial knowledge. Specifically, Rubakult (2014) indicates that, besides being purely frustrating, with a reappearance of inherent issues of PA, the NPA strategy was also very inappropriate to a substantial portion of African nations. The above-mentioned stance clearly

sheds light on the contextual variance issue that has to be resolved by scholars and public administration practitioners. According to Essien (2015), there is no universally accepted definition of PA, which adds to the dimensions of the field; the absence of convergence renders an important case of business education. The shifting and fluctuating duality PA, as it is being presented by Raharja (2020), who supports the idea that the profession is borrowing various areas in management and is forever undergoing the process of shapeshifting, directly influences the identified body of knowledge in management literature and theories. Although business education and management theories have areas of focus, which are quite numerous, the research has managed to make a case on these two critical areas.

3.1.5 Public Administration in Africa

In their article, Lukamba and Molokwane (2017) state that the history of the creation of public administration in Africa is a complicated and multidimensional process determined by the historical, political, social, and economic forces. The following part gives an outline of the most important historical milestones and challenges in the province of public administration in Africa. The history of the development of the public administration in the African continent could be dated back to the colonial period, when the European countries instituted administrative systems to control the countries under their respective colonies. Nevertheless, Kgobe and Mamokhere (2023) claim that the ideological shift brought by the colonial period was not complete; therefore, the field of public administration continues to be challenged quite significantly. Colonial history has had a permanent effect on the form of public administration in most of the African states, influencing the bureaucratic system, laws and governance system.

Lukamba and Molokwane (2017) claim that after the independence movements that took place in the middle of the 20th century, numerous states in Africa tried to establish their administrative structures. It was during this time that new nation-states were born and there was a need to come up with institutions that could efficiently run the governance process, deliver services to the populace and develop economically. Lukamba and Molokwane the two are investigating the idea of a colonial legacy and they are inspired by the Greek philosophy of Aristotle and Plato. They state that the strong culture and common ideology play a critical role in the development of the governance culture. Furthermore, Malatjie, Hussein and Nduhura (2021) note that the capacity building problem and institutional strengthening have become one of the most critical issues in the process of developing the sphere of public administration in Africa. More importantly, African countries have experienced the problem of

building and maintaining skilled and professional civil service and commonly they struggle with corruption, nepotism and political manipulation in terms of administration.

As noted by the United Nations Economic Commission of Africa (UNECA, 2011), African countries consist of a varied lot, which poses a significant challenge to the issue of ensuring there is unity within the said population. Such diversity can be attributed to the fact that there are numerous ethnic groups, languages and cultural practices on the continent. To this complexity is an additional factor of the variable political structures, government, and administration systems that have been embraced by the African nations, so that there are different approaches to the administration of the public offices. Decentralisation and local governance has been chosen by some countries in the name of empowering communities and making the processes of making decisions closer to the people. On the other hand, other nations have opted to distribute administrative structures which are centralised, where decision-making revolves at a national level. Such unique styles have led to a mosaic of administrative systems in Africa, which are indicative of the diverse, rich tapestry of cultures, traditions, and political ideologies on the continent. Asongu, Efobi and Tchamyou (2018) assert that the mounting interdependence of economies has brought with it several new and complicated challenges to the African public administration. Specifically, the quick adaptation to the ever-changing technological environment is becoming one of the major requirements of public administrators. Moreover, Ainscough and Shank (2023) argue that within the last few years, the African continent has advanced in the sphere of public administration immensely. Many nations have instituted changes with a view to enhancing governance, transparency and accountability as well as modernisations of administrative systems. Such initiatives have been strengthened by regional organisations, international partners and civil society groups, hence leading to the general development of public administration on the continent.

In brief, it is possible to state that the history of the development of the public administration in Africa was shaped by quite complicated interrelations between chronological, political, and socioeconomic circumstances. With all the challenges, there is success in terms of setting up good and responsible administrative systems.

3.1.6 Public Administration in Zimbabwe

According to Mapfumo and Mutereko (2019), the history of public administration in the country of Zimbabwe is rich and complex in the sense that the country has a diversity of experiences which influence its development and operation. The transformation and development of Zimbabwe in the field of public administration from the pre-independence times to the present

has gone through different steps and has experienced some distinguishable problems. In Zimbabwe, before independence, public administration was subject to much colonial influence in terms of policy and structure. The colonial government brought in administrative systems that had the interests of the colonisers in mind and they seemed to be corrosive to the natives. This legacy has left an indelible mark on the government administration and governance in the country. After independence, Zimbabwe attempted to create an administration that would be sensitive to the needs of the citizens. Additionally, Ndudzo (2014) claims that the Zimbabwean government focused on the localisation of the said administration to establish a more representative system. There was an attempt to consider the problems of equity, access to service and empowerment of marginalised groups. Nevertheless, Zinyama (2021) notes that over the years, the public administration in Zimbabwe has experienced remarkable difficulties, such as the problems of corruption, bureaucratic inadequacies, and political instability. These have worked against good governance and service delivery, which has subsequently affected the lives of average citizens. Marumahoko (2021) states that in recent years, there have been attempts at the restructuring and modernisation of the country's public administration. Efforts to ensure better transparency, accountability and efficiency have been made. Besides, efforts to ensure that technology is used to enhance the administrative processes and generally deliver better service have also been on the agenda. It is pertinent to mention that the contextual variations between developed and developing states have a central role in determining the features of the public administration in Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, the study by Choto and Poshai (2023) discloses that the effect of political, social, and economic dynamics on the operation of the public institutions and provision of the public services is profound. As Zimbabwe strives to be a modern developmental state, it is imperative to explore the transition of public administration in Zimbabwe. The focus on public administration in Zimbabwe surfaces broader theoretical frameworks that underpin the transition of public administration in Zimbabwe. The dynamic and turbulent environment demands administrative practices and policies that should constantly be reevaluated in order to remain relevant.

More importantly, Dzingirai, Karonga and Mazenge (2023) postulate that the future of Zimbabwean public administration would rest on how it tackles governance, transparency and the institutional capacity challenges. Through experiences of the past, modernisation, and nurturing culture of integrity and accountability, Zimbabwe can strive to develop a system of public administration that can significantly benefit the welfare of the people in Zimbabwe and contribute to the development agenda of the country.

3.1.7 Prior literature and strategic management

According to Bryson and George (2017) there is a deafening silence on strategic management in literature, and mention of the same is only evident from the 1980s onwards. The above-mentioned duo maintains that strategic management was seen as a concept borrowed from private enterprises and not as a critical public administration practice. However, Maleka (2015) asserts that strategic management has become critical with the increased need for accountability and transparency in public administration. He (Maleka, 2015) drawing from Bovaird (2009), contends that with the rampant incompetence and failure to deliver basic services in the public sector, strategic management has emerged as a critical intervention to change this trajectory. Bryson, George and Seo (2022) assert that research in strategic management concerning the public sector has emerged as incoherent and messy owing to the lack of clarity in goal formulation and implementation. Public administration has ignored informal structures, yet these structures play a critical role in strategic planning and strategy implementation (Wada *et al.*, 2023).

In agreement with the previously stated position Franco (2014) posit that strategic management is a social process driven by social actors' interaction. Furthermore, Borgatti and Foster (2003) underscore the importance of social capital that is brought about by informal structures through the act of shared knowledge and shared experiences. Prior literature, as revealed by Poister and Streib (1999) reveals that the public sector was driven by a quest for results and lacked proper subsequent strategic management approaches that enabled the sector to plan and monitor public organisations systematically. Commenting on the body of knowledge regarding the presentation of strategic management in organisational studies Alvesson and Blom (2022) assert that the field has been marred by the hegemonic ambiguity of big Concepts. Furthermore, put differently, scholars in strategic management have added a barrage of cryptic terms, which have relentlessly made the field extremely complex.

3.1.8 Strategic Management and Informal Structures

According to Joya (2020), the term informal organisations was first mentioned in 1934 by F. J. Roethlisberger, who assisted Mayo in carrying out the Hawthorne experiments. The results of the same experiment were subsequently refined in 1939, which gave rise to the cradle of diverse perspectives in informal structures/organisations. Drawing from a more strategic management perspective, Joya (2020) anchors on Murugesan (2014), who deems informal structures as social units set up to execute specific goals. It is interesting to note that the role of strategic management in light of the given definition should be viewed as an attempt to align

organisational objectives with the socially derived objectives of employees. In total agreement with this premise Borgatti and Foster (2003) acknowledge the shift from an individualistic perspective to a more individualistic, atomistic and essentialist perspective to a more relational perspective. The relational perspective is strongly connected to the notion of social capital, as argued by Bhandari and Yasunobu (2009). The duo argue that social capital includes structure, cognitive bonding, shared norms, and bridging and linking of agents who are driven by common objectives, values and social norms.

Furthermore, Sammut-Bonnici (2015) states that strategic management is a crucial aspect of organisational success, involving formulating and implementing initiatives to achieve long-term objectives. Furthermore, Lew, Meyerowits and Svensson (2019) argue that one often overlooked factor influencing strategic management is the presence of informal structures within an organisation. Whetsell, Kroll and Dehart-Davis (2021) assert that informal structures are the links, connections, and activities that are present in the organisation besides the outlined structure and documentation of an organisation. The research seeks to reveal how strategic management relates to the informal structures in an organisation.

Furthermore, Makena, Mudeje Buya and Kibui (2023) stated that informal structures can be instrumental in strategic initiatives. Formal structures offer a definite chain of command and the division of roles, whereas informal structures can work with formal structures or against them. Informal leaders and networks can emerge within the organisation and they can affect how information is spread as well as negatively influence decision-making processes within the organisation, and ultimately, strategic plans may be rendered ineffective. More importantly, Lazarević-Moravčević and Mosurović Ružičić (2023) argue that the informal structures are capable of shaping organisational culture, which is central to strategic management. The organisational culture can be influenced by the norms, values, and behaviours that are exercised in the informal networks.

In their turn, Bamidele (2017) discusses that organisational culture has the power to determine the acceptance and implementation of strategic plans. When informal structures are inconsistent with the targeted outcomes of the strategic initiatives, they will pose as barriers to change, creating a serious challenge to the success of strategic management initiatives. In addition, Mahaputra, Mahaputra and Maharani (2023) state that strategic management has the potential to influence unofficial structures of an organisation. They might result in the creation of new informal networks, collaborations and behaviours amongst the employees as organisations pursue strategic goals. Comprehending and exploiting such informal forces and their dynamics can be beneficial to strategic management because it can be useful in the

enhancement of communication, innovation, and alignment of informal networks to organisational aims.

.Furthermore, Kadakure and Twum-Darko (2024) indicate that the relationship between strategic management and informal structures is intricate and multifaceted. Organisations need to recognise and understand the informal networks and behaviours within their structures, as these can significantly influence the success of strategic initiatives. Organisations can proactively address and leverage informal structures to enhance their strategic management processes and improve their overall performance.

3.1.9 Informal structures in the workplace in Zimbabwe

Nyagadza, Gwiza and Hove (2022) argue that the workplace in Zimbabwe is a microcosm of society and mirrors the same in terms of diversity and social interaction. In Zimbabwe, diversity is a very broad aspect and it is critical to note that workplace diversity is characterised by gender, ethnic, cultural, age, and educational components. According to Dudzo (2014), this diversity comes along with a wide array of views, experiences and expertise, which are highly valued in terms of fostering creativity, innovation and success of organisations. One of the factors of diversity in the Zimbabwean workplace is the acknowledgement and understanding of the informal structure that runs within organisations.

Musanzikwa and Ramchander (2018) assert that informal structures are always guided by the cultural norms and traditions that tend to have far-reaching effects on the nature of interpersonal relations, communication and decision-making procedures within the workplace. Vigatsi and Amuhaya (2019) stated that diversity and informal arrangements should be recognised in the workplace because doing so promotes an inclusive and equitable culture. In doing so, the organisations can embrace the power of diversity to enable growth, productivity and sustainability. Furthermore, according to Nyagadza, Gwiza and Hove (2022), embracing diversity in the workplace of Zimbabwe is key in promoting an inclusive culture, which also respects and values individual differences. This could involve carrying out diversity training initiatives, establishing support structures for underrepresented populations, as well as actively marketing equal employment opportunities in advancing careers.

3.1.10 The difference between Information structures and Informal structures

According to Whetsell, Kroll and Dehart-Davis (2021), interaction between informal structures and information is what determines how organisations work and explore innovations. Information structures are well structured reservoirs of explicit knowledge. Examples such as

databases, internal nets and official reporting centres store information in a format convenient to its employees to use in decision making and adherence to company regulations.

Fu et al. (2019), on the contrary, disclose that informal structures concern the exchange of individual insights and experiences that can be of very limited articulation, although essential in the enhancement of the organisation. These are the peer relationships, mentor relationships and informal partnerships where ideas are exchanged freely and creative solutions are created. Making both the explicit (formal) and implicit (informal) information mutually complementary through personal knowledge that leads to an environment of learning which appreciates an optimal way of amalgamating formal and informal structures (Makena, Mudeje Buya & Kibui, 2023). The article by Seijong et al., (2017) explains that information structures are structured and anticipated, and there are clear protocols and defined positions. At the same time, the article by Wada et al. (2023) indicates that informal structures are fixing the significance of individual relations and adaptability, coping with the intricacy of group work.

According to Jung, Luger and Mammen (2023), the informal networks that deliver creativity and flexibility can be restrained by the rigid information structures, and the organisational culture and change management. An appreciation and prioritisation of informal structures would enable organisations to know how knowledge flows naturally. This may cause cooperation and inventiveness that could be ignored by formal processes. Informal conversations create a connection between the employees, create a trusted sense of belonging and increase job satisfaction and employee productivity (Crul, Schneider & Lelie, 2021).

A review of the mechanism of action of these structures demonstrates the complexities of relationships within organisations. It makes leaders reflect upon formal steps and human relations in conducting their organisations. Information combination with informal structures enables organisations to succeed in an interrelated and changeable world.

3.1.11 Informal Structures as part of an organisational system

According to Joya (2020), the Informal structures form part of any organisational system and are significant in influencing the work environment and the dynamics in the organisational setting. Furthermore, Kroll and Dehart-Davis (2021) expose that formal structures can be seen as the formal reporting relationship, processes and regulations of an organisation, but in contrast, informal structure consists of unwritten rules, conventions and ties between employees. Such informal structures have the capacity to contribute immensely to the

operations of how work is undertaken, decisions made and movement of information in the organisation. According to Legros and Cislaghi (2020), the presence of social networks in the organisation is one of the main characteristics of informal structures. There are usually informal groupings or networks among the employees who share common interests, experience and everyday responsibilities. The networks have the potential to cross formal hierarchies and functional groups, getting information, support, and resources beyond the formal mechanisms. Such informal networks may help to transfer the best practice, distribute knowledge and solve problems in the organisation (Goteiner & Fligstein, 2021).

Referring to the research by Guan and So (2023), the organisational culture may also be influenced by informal structures. It is possible that the workplace culture is dictated by the post-informal norms and values that arise in such informal structures. Consider the case where a specific team has a relatively well-established culture of collaboration and innovation. These activities may bend the existing organisational culture even though it is not formally required by the structure. In addition, Muiruri (2023) states that such informal structures usually have informal leaders. Such individuals who are not expected to be leaders, but are influential organisational change agents, participate in the development of organisational change consensus and garner support towards new initiatives (Yakubovich & Burg, 2019).

Organisations need to recognise and leverage informal structures to their advantage. Ignoring or suppressing informal structures can lead to decreased morale, communication breakdowns, and organisational inefficiencies. Instead, organisations can harness the power of informal structures by fostering a culture of open communication, encouraging cross-departmental collaboration, and providing opportunities for employees to form meaningful connections beyond their formal roles (Koch & Denner, 2022).

Within the context of strategic management of the Gweru Municipality, stakeholder involvement is needed since it fosters inclusivity and ensures that different perspectives of residents are considered when making decisions. Based on Sachs and Kujala (2021), the municipality must do well in understanding and prioritising the needs and demands of the community and ensuring they involve stakeholders in the community, establishing the needs and prioritising them with the community.

Other than improving on accountability and the element of transparency, this co-operative approach improves the level of trust between the municipality and its occupants. Moreover, according to Xegwana, Herron and Nyika (2024), stakeholders are important organisational members because they contribute towards the availability and deployment of important assets

and knowledge and engagement in strategic activities that are stronger and more empowered than others.

Finally, as cited in Knox, Marin-Cadavid and Osiri (2024), the informal structures form a natural and invaluable element of any organisational system. Organisations should be able to explore these informal structures through the understanding of the role of informal networks, cultural norms, and emergent leaders. The harmonisation of formal and informal structures would result in an agile and robust organisational environment better placed to handle change and lead to success.

3.1.12 Gaps in organisational literature reviewed

Informal organisations in public institutions of developing countries have a unique narrative, which makes the study of the complexity of public administration in developing nations a critical area of focus. Whetsell, Kroll and Dehart-Davis (2021), quoting Kahn and Kram (1994), in their writings contend that though the formal organisation of public institutions is widely known and studied, the informal organisations of these organisations are largely ignored though there are critical in shaping decision-making within the organisation and to greater extent also influence the behaviour of employees. This study aimed at exploring and analysing the composition, influence, and regulation of informal organisational structures within the public sector of a developing country.

(a) Nature of organisational Informal Structures

Organisational informal systems within the public sector of developing countries define the unwritten rules, norms, relationships, values and communication protocols that operate in conjunction with the formal chain of command. Furthermore, Siciliano and Thompson (2018) affirm that informal structures often influence the behaviour of employees and provide the structure in which decisions are made. In most of the developing countries, informal systems are deeply entrenched in the influence of culture, heritage and the scramble for limited resources.

(b) Organisational Informal Structures' Influence

The organisational informal structures' influence on public institutions in developing countries has potential. To start with, Makena, Mudeje, Buya, and Kibui (2023) contend that the informal structures can either support or undermine the formal organisational structure, leading to potential challenges in implementing resolutions and strategic decisions. Drawing from Mallik, Mallik and Alumni (2019); Priya and Raman (2020), it can be argued that informal structures

have an influence on worker morale and job satisfaction because they influence productivity, which subsequently circumvents bureaucratic red tape levels. However, informal networks have the potential to harbour corruption, nepotism, and favouritism within public-run institutions, thus having an impact on governance and public trust (Okyere-Kwakye, Nor & Nor, 2010).

Drawing from Küpers (2014), it can be established that identification of informal structures is not simple because this involves carrying out ethnographic studies, interviews, and social network mapping within the organisation. The identified informal structures should be actively subjected to the organisation's formal goals and objectives through strategic interventions like team building, organisational culture initiatives, and leadership training programs. The aforementioned approach will ensure transparency, accountability, and achievement-based practices that can curb the ill effects of informal structures.

3.2 Summary

Concisely, it is critical to explore informal structures of public institutions within developing countries, especially in the area of public administration. The study of informal structures within developing countries is critical, based on the divergence of cultural and social norms that underpin these developing countries. More importantly, it is needful to explore the rich historical influence that underpins the developing countries and the subsequent influence this has on the matrix structure of public-run institutions.

Effective handling of informal structures is important as it may yield positive consequences for how public institutions may manage and control internal informal structures. It can bring about efficiency, transparency, and accountability that public institutions in developing countries need to function effectively. Furthermore, handling informal structures can make governance and service delivery in these countries much better. Through the discovery of the nuances of informal structures, public administrators can devise more strategies that can ensure efficient service delivery within public institutions. This, in turn, can better respond to the diverse and transitional needs of their constituents, ultimately contributing to these developing countries as a whole. examining the influence of these informal networks on organisational performance and employee engagement.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter is a fair attempt to comprehend the informal organisational structures of public institutions in developing countries. The chapter demonstrated that informal organisational structures are underpinned by embedded social norms, cultural values, ethnic diversity and historical context. The chapter further demonstrates that if factors that undergird the social macro environment are addressed, then this will subsequently lead to improved efficiency, accountability and productivity. The chapter revealed that strong institutions, which have integrated formal and informal structures, often fulfil their strategic objectives. The chapter argues that a responsive government must take into consideration informal networks because these structures have an impact on the strategic trajectory of government entities. In this chapter, the study explored the application of mixed methods in research. The study further explored the relevance of purposive sampling and open-ended questions and dovetailed it with the role played by Chi-Square in testing the various hypotheses. This chapter argued how systems thinking and mixed methods have a close relationship, given that the two are complementary in binding complex phenomena of management. Through the exploratory sequential design and the cross-contextual analysis discussed in this chapter, the validity of the study was enhanced in dovetailing qualitative and quantitative analysis arising from two different contexts. It is apparent that a combination of research methods allows the study to support and cross-check the results to determine their credibility. Furthermore, the research employed an exploratory sequential research design, which led to an increase in the credibility of findings and contributed to the academic integrity and scholarly rigour of the study. It is also noteworthy that this research design contributed to investigating various aspects of the phenomenon, which allowed the study to come up with more elaborate and detailed insights. Finally, this research design made the research results valid and reliable, which is why it is a valuable part of the methodological procedure in different disciplines.

Lastly, the research results were validated and increased in reliability due to the research design technique, which is an important aspect of the methodological approach of any domain. Finally, the chapter dealt with the relation between mixed methods and research philosophy, goals and questions.

4.2 Pragmatism as the research paradigm

Using understanding deduced from the work of Rehman and Alharthi (2016), the research paradigm adopted played a crucial role in shaping the approach and methods used in this research. The chosen paradigm aided the research to set beliefs, values, and philosophical assumptions that undergird the research through an ontological framework that enables the study to qualitatively analyse the notion of strategic management implementation**.** Khabibullah, Alimin and Sholahuddin (2025) assert that pragmatism presents a viable philosophical perspective, which appreciates practical efficacy in research objectives and enables researchers to make a rational choice and combination of methods that are most appropriate to address their research questions, and are not bound by the rigid philosophical paradigms. Drawing from Imran (2024) pragmatism within the presentation of the exploratory sequential design also suggests that an initial qualitative inquiry should be conducted that will uncover the contextual themes and hence proceed to quantitative analysis.

Furthermore Maarouf(2019) asserts that pragmatism enables internal flexibility and thus can easily be adapted to suit various contexts but always preserves the comparability of the underlying constructs. This paradigm enabled the study to pursue a three-phase approach of data analysis with the initial stage being qualitative, followed by quantitative and then concluded by cross-contextual analysis. More importantly Sharma *et al.*(2023); Gogo and Musonda, (2022) concur that a sequential approach to an exploratory design relies on pragmatic principles which ensure that the quantitative tools are impacted in a profound manner by qualitative information and minimise the imposition of inappropriate constructs in heterogeneous settings by force.

Interestingly, Gobo (2023); Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021) argue that the epistemological peculiarities of mixed methods research are pragmatic, as it is the only paradigm that allows the positivist and interpretivist views to reconcile, which also makes the mixed methods research approach in the sequential design paradigm cover both the exploratory and confirmatory components of research. Pragmatism is capable of retaining the sense of local meanings in the research that cuts across diverse contexts, but without diminishing the quest for general theoretical or pragmatic knowledge. It also facilitates methodological pluralism whereby the methods of both qualitative and quantitative are combined in a cross-contextual and sequential way to enhance depth and breadth (Buyisani Dube et al., 2024). The practical orientation on effects and implications accentuates research designs centred on practical knowledge, as opposed to theorising (Morgan, 2022; Gillespie et al., 2024).

The step that is traditionally informed by the qualitative step that precedes it is the next step in quantitative methodologies, justified by pragmatism due to the understanding of knowledge as contingent and developing (Munce et al., 2021). The realistic scheme of cross-contextual comparisons is a middle ground between the need to gain contextual knowledge and the desire to be generalised to a broader context (Wagenaar et al., 2022). Also, it adroitly balances the rigor of methods and its practical usefulness and admires the qualitative richness and quantitative generalizability (Zoelner, 2025; Mitchell, 2023).

Pragmatism allows an elegant reconfiguration of the instruments and processes to suit each specific case and sustain the intellectual continuity, in a fashion that the validity does not come at the cost of the context sensitivity (Buyisani Dube et al., 2024). In this philosophy, the conventional division of the qualitative and quantitative paradigms, transforming the design into a sequence and comparison, is welcome (Gillespie et al., 2024). Sequential cross-contextual design is particularly useful when the phenomena are not manifested in a similar environment; in that case, assumptions made by the qualitative knowledge gained in a particular environment can be strictly tested in a different one (Munce et al., 2021; Wagenaar et al., 2022).

Pragmatism also explains the utilisation of different sources of information, process-by-process, and comparative analysis systems as a means to the end of coming up with more practically relevant knowledge (Mitchell, 2023). It encourages abductive reasoning, which is the process initiated with the observations but passes through the transition to the theoretical propositions, which is the focus of the exploratory sequential research (Mitchell, 2023; Morgan, 2022). Lastly, the pragmatic paradigm promotes historically reflective discourse of the critical role of methodological choices, sequencing, and cultural disparities in informing the findings of research that fosters disclosure and consistency of research, which both engage exploratory sequential design and cross-contextual analysis inextricably (Buyisani Dube et al., 2024; Zoelner, 2025).

4.3 Research approach

Drawing from Taherdoost (2022), the study produced a blueprint to guide the trajectory of the research and to integrate research objectives, research aims and research questions and dovetailed these facets with the expected outcomes of the study. The study utilised mixed methods in order to critically analyse the relationship between the social antecedents that underpin the informal structures and corporate strategy within the municipality of Gweru. The

study employed mixed methods because Taherdoost (2022) states that combining two methods can assist the researcher in handling complex research situations in various areas, such as social and health research.

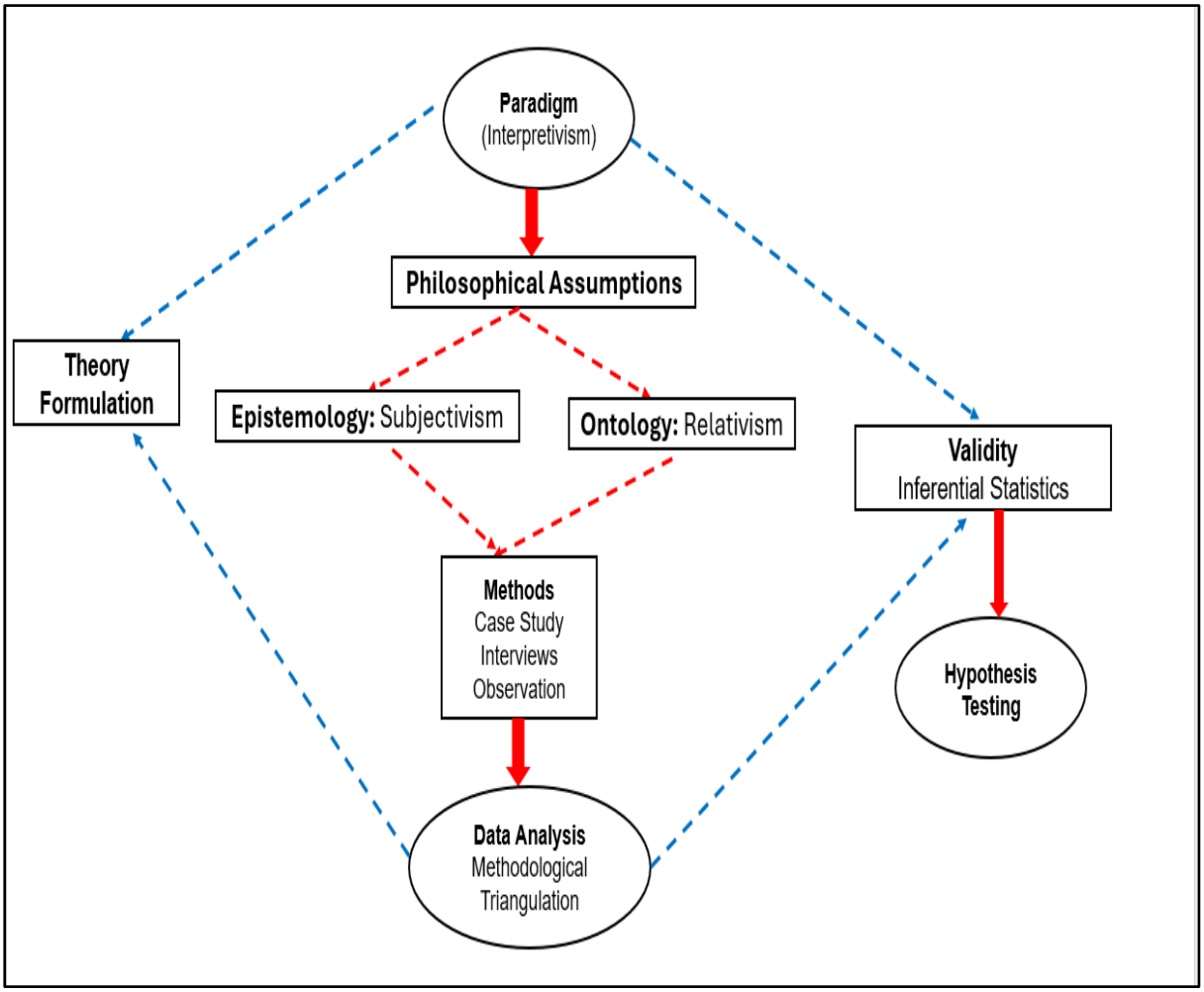

Figure 4.1: Research Process

4.4 Philosophical assumptions

The study is grounded in philosophical assumptions because Mun, Musa and Wong (2011) reveal that philosophical assumptions constitute fundamental elements that guide academic research and shape the methodologies and approaches employed by researchers. The philosophical assumptions enabled the study to contain the beliefs and values that govern organisational behaviour. Defining the research philosophy based on Handema et al. (2023), it can be established that research philosophy has underpinnings that inform the processing, analysis and conclusion of the collected data.

The philosophy of research is a systemic reflection of the notion of positionality in relation to personal exposure of the researcher that has a part to play in the decoding and interpretation

of data gathered. Besides, Grass (2024) states that the research assumptions are based on two philosophical constructs, namely, epistemology and ontology. Besides, Sol and Heng (2022) state that epistemology is an area of inquiry that entails the investigation of knowledge and its acquisition. Ontology, on the other hand, refers to what reality is and how inference can be drawn from world views.

4.4.1 Epistemology

The study explains how knowledge is understood because Sol and Heng (2022) argue that epistemology is the part of philosophy that looks at the theory of knowledge, especially its methods, validity, and scope. The study looked at what knowledge is, how people get it, and how sure people can be about what they know from an epistemological point of view. Singh and Walwyn (2017) also state that epistemology looks at the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower, the known, and the knowledge itself. This branch of philosophy looks into what belief is, how to justify it, and whether or not it is rational. Epistemology is, in short, the study of knowledge and how we come to know what we know.

4.4.2 Subjective epistemology

The study largely abstracted data from the lived experiences of research participants because Littlejohn (2018) states that subjective epistemology is based on how knowledge is constrained and obtained from an individual's subjective experiences and perspectives. More importantly, they identified the themes and concepts present in the acquired data, as Vega-Encabo (2016) affirms that knowledge depends on personal interpretations, beliefs, and emotions. This has typically been contrasted with objective epistemology, which is concerned with whether something is the case regardless of what the individual feels about it. The science of subjective epistemology observes that what one person holds to be true is different on an individual basis and is based on the experiences and interpretations of each person. It promotes the significance of individual subjectivity in the quest for knowledge.

4.5 Mixed methods research

Hafsa (2019) stipulates that mixed methods refer to a research strategy that defines both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This research design is comprehensive in that it enabled the study to obtain a deeper insight into the research problem since different data sets were used. The utilisation of qualitative and quantitative data analysis helped the study to gain a better and more empirical understanding of the research issue. The methodology

offered a considerably wider means to do a stratification of the different layers under which the research phenomenon is founded. As it has been argued by Antwi et al. (2015), one approach of data analysis cannot result in a holistic understanding of a research phenomenon. The study employed mixed methods as a way of attaining robust and reliable findings. The research employed mixed methods to enhance the robustness and reliability of the findings. The study utilised the definition of mixed methods as given by Hall (2013), who draws from Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009). In the definition, a clear distinction is made between multi-methods and mixed methods. From the prior argument, it can be clearly established that multi-methods can constitute several research methods, which may incorporate either qualitative or quantitative approaches. More importantly, mixed methods refer to the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. In agreement with the above articulated premise. Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021) argue that a longitudinal analysis reveals that for the past 20 years, positivism and anti-positivism have found solid expression in a mixed methods research approach. Interestingly, Roomaney and Coetzee (2018) reveal that in social/ behavioural science, mixed methods are also referred to as combined research.

Furthermore, the duo (Roomaney and Coetzee) also reveal that mixed methods evolved from the multi-trait/multi-method design initially by Campbell and Fiske (1959). In this study, the focus is on a local government organisation that operates within a complex matrix structure and employs a diverse group of individuals with varying behavioural traits. The study used mixed methods, which do not focus on differences between positivist and non-positivist philosophies because Doyle et al. (2009) argue that utilising mixed methods dispels the misleading narrative and dichotomy between positivist and non-positivist philosophies proposed by purists. It is evident that mixed methods are grounded in pragmatism, enabling the study to employ a blend of methods to address the complexities of the politics and administration dilemma.

4.5.1 Mixed methods research design

The study used mixed methods but based the research on a single epistemology because, according to Timans et al. (2019), as cited in Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021), Mixed methods research must not be epistemologically separate, though its premise is drawn from qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Based on this premise, the research conflated the two approaches (quantitative and qualitative) to have an integrated approach. The research adopted the mixed methods research process design. The research followed eight key steps because, according to Johnson and Onwuegbusie (2004), a mixed model should pursue the following steps:

1. Determine the research question
2. Determine whether a mixed design is appropriate
3. Select the mixed method or mixed-model research design
4. Collect the data
5. Analyse the data
6. Interpret the data
7. legitimate the data
8. Draw conclusions (if warranted)

Furthermore, drawing from Greene et al. (1989) as cited in Johnson and Onwuegbusie (2004), It is evident that there are various mixed research method models, as indicated below:

1. Complementarity: Seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method
2. Initiation: Exploring paradoxes and contradictions that result in a reframing of the research question.
3. Development: Employing the results obtained from one method to inform the other method.
4. Expansion: Seeking to broaden research by using diverse methods for different inquiry components.

In the study, mixed methods and cross-contextual analysis were utilised as a research design, and this approach will be thoroughly elaborated upon in the subsequent section.

4.5.2 Sequential Exploratory research design

Gogo and Musonda (2022) assert that exploratory sequential research design is an impressive approach in the world of behavioural sciences, this approach skilfully manages the complex environments of human experience through a methodological adoption of mixed methods. More importantly Berman (2017) points out that this methodology begins with a comprehensive qualitative study, which seeks to reveal the many-layered aspects of complex phenomena, and then moves to more quantitative scales that will be able to describe and prove results more precisely. Sharma (2023) argues that this kind of hierarchical order is not an esoteric procedural inclination, but a fundamental structure that helps make certain that the development of quantitative tools is enriched with remarkably productive qualitative knowledge, thus, making them more culturally and context-sensitive.

Interestingly, Huyler and McGill (2019) contend that sequential research design is based on an iterative process because of the need to reinforce the research findings. The knowledge gained during the qualitative exploration is used to inform and guide the following quantitative investigation in order to create a dynamic interaction that enhances the overall rigour of the research activities. This kind of applicability to a diverse range of fields highlights the methodological versatility of the exploratory sequential research, which makes it skilful in accommodating a range of research questions and research hypotheses (Vinevala, Halcro &Acharyya, 2024)

Nevertheless, Saka, Osademe and Ononokpono (2023) reveal that the design has not gone without its critics, who argue that such implementation is prohibitively time-consuming and resource-consuming. This criticism highlights one of the pivotal considerations, namely; resource allocation should be prudently handled in research agendas. However, Aramide, Jacob and Pillay (2023) argue that sequential exploratory research designs not only carry the distinctive abilities to provide meaningful and context-oriented discoveries, but are also indispensable in developing the scholarship in various fields.

The integrative approach of the qualitative and quantitative approaches is essential to generate comprehensive and impactful research results. Finally, Toyon (2021) argues that the advantage of using exploratory sequential designs is based not only on the methodological soundness but also on the philosophical desire to enhance our knowledge of the complex human phenomena, thereby questioning the reductionist nature of the traditional research paradigms.

The combination of mixed methods with cross-contextual analysis in research design creates a complex system for developing a subtle, context-based knowledge. According Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021) mixed methods research is based on the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, which enables a researcher to embrace the advantages of both. This will not only enable a methodological rigour of data analysis, but will also increase validity in the research. The method was chosen to strengthen the validity of the research, given the limited interviews that were carried out.

Bartol, Vehovar and Petrovčič,(2025) assert that Cross-contextual analysis, contributes to expanding the areas where the research may be relevant and applicable, in other words, in different environments, cultures, or organisations. More importantly, Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) reveal that placing the phenomena into several settings enables researchers to test the external validity of their findings more rigorously. The common findings across the two

different contexts provided clarity on the universality of some of the social antecedents and also provided the study an opportunity to define the divergence of the two contexts (public sector in Zimbabwe and a mining Company in South Africa) with the aim of deepening the premise of theory formulation.

Naturally, there is some controversy in integrating these approaches. Critics like Bell and Bryman (2007) have postulated that the inherent differences between positivism and interpretivism paradigm run the risk of creating incoherence in the methodology. However, Elgeddawy and Abouraia (2024); Maarouf (2019) contend that the pragmatic paradigm that is mostly related to mixed methods tries to overcome this situation by focusing more on the research question and not necessarily following one particular methodology. Mixed methods research can also be seen to complement cross-contextual analysis in the sense that it does not only permit multiple types of data, but also actively attempts to place findings into a number of different sociocultural and institutional contexts. The outcome is internally sound and externally applicable research.

Lowry (2025) contends that the layered data of mixed methods is of great benefit to cross-contextual analysis that is commonly used in comparative case studies. As an example, qualitative interviews can help reveal cultural dynamics, whereas quantitative surveys can determine patterns in various settings that can lead to meaningful comparisons and theory formulation Gobo2023). Such synergy is necessary, especially in the global education, public administration and social policy research disciplines where context sensitivity is fundamental.

Finally, Imran (2024) argues that the mixed methods and cross-contextual analysis strengthen the methodological pluralism, maximising exploratory strength and relevance to the context, which is the goal of combining both methods and types of analysis. These designs are not mutually exclusive but complementary instruments which allow the researcher to explore multifaceted phenomena in a variety of settings with rigour and depth.

The research succeeded in getting a multidimensional perspective from the gathered data. The multi-dimensional view increased the validity and reliability of the study since the research phenomenon was viewed from different angles. An exploratory sequential research design involves the use of statistical analysis to corroborate or refute findings. This method enables the study to paint a broader picture of the research phenomenon. Donkoh and Mensah (2023) contend that the exploratory sequential research design is a method that uses more than one research method to make sense of research data, thereby enabling diversity of positions on the analysed data. Drawing from the notion of positionality, this research design circumvents

the challenge of a monolithic view that arises from utilising a single view from one research method . This method makes the conclusions of the research more valid and acceptable. More importantly, the study incorporated systems theory, where the Iceberg theory was applied, which is a breakaway from the Structuration theory and social identity theory applied in the prior undertaking. The above understanding is based on Valencia (2022), who describes mixed methods as a research methodology where several theoretical perspectives/ frameworks are used to investigate a given phenomenon. The use of another theory allowed the study to obtain a more balanced and in-depth perspective of the topic of interest. This procedure enabled the study to validate and support results across multiple theoretical contexts, and in so doing, it made the research findings and the established process more rigorous/tight and reliable. The mixed methods approach allowed the study to uncover different aspects of the phenomenon and helped to generate stronger conclusions and points of insight. According to Donkoh and Mensah (2023), mixed methods is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. Although the ontological and epistemological framework of qualitative and quantitative research approaches differ, there are certain similarities in terms of the scope and nature of the inquiry. Drawing from Thurmond (2001), both the qualitative and the quantitative research methods seek to understand and explain the behaviour and events. As such, the best features of both strategies were incorporated in a single study. Figure 4.2 presents the research design model below.

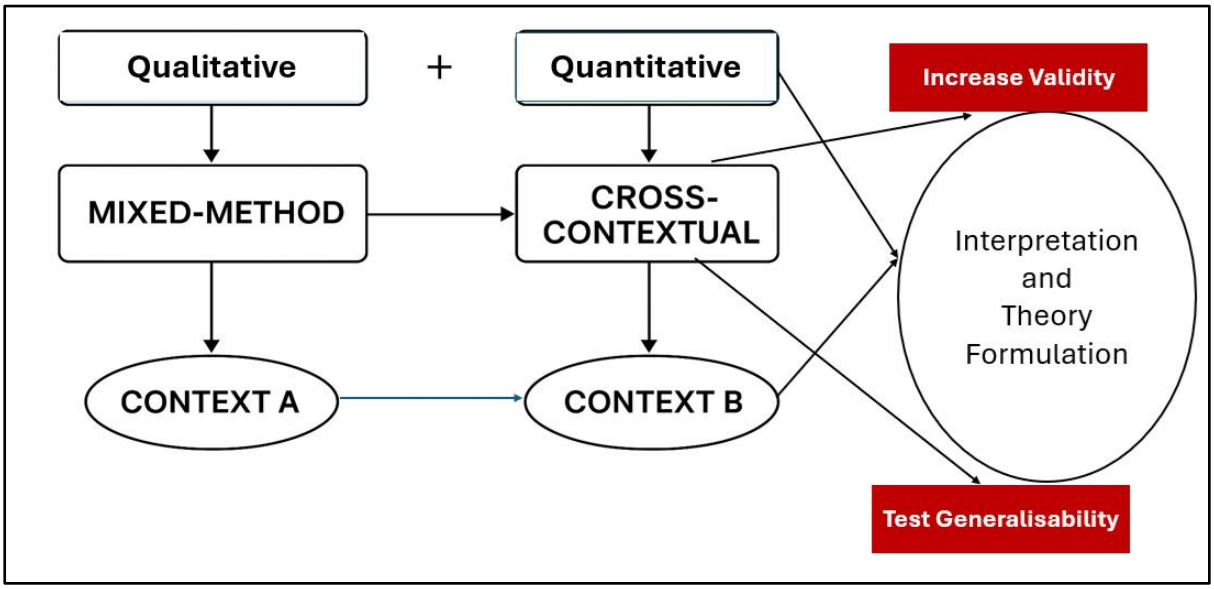

Figure 4.2: Research Design

4.5.3 Purposive Sampling: Heterogeneous Purposive Sampling

The study selected research participants who had in-depth knowledge and exposure to the research matter because, according to Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024) Purposive sampling, or selective sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique that involves selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research question. Furthermore, the heterogeneous purposive sampling approach allowed the research to target individuals who possessed divergent experiences but who had encounters that were most pertinent to the study, enhancing the depth and richness of the data collected (Etikan, 2016). The outcome of the diverse purposive sampling produced interconnected themes that allowed the study to develop a theory through an interconnected path derived from the emerging themes (Fatoki, 2009). The sampling approach aligns with the research paradigm (Interpretivism) because it enables the study to abstract the individual experiences of research participants.

4.5.4 Sample Size

The research reached an important stage where the researchers noticed repeating themes and patterns. At this point, getting more data was superfluous; this idea fits with the belief that after a while, more facts might not help a study to better understand a phenomenon but only repeat what we already know. The above assertion is congruent with the argument by Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024), who point out that a saturation point is a point at which a qualitative study reaches a level where no new themes or insights emerge from the data collection process, indicating that enough data has been collected to answer the research questions. This is why the sample size was originally set at 60 but ended up defaulting to 45 research participants. Drawing from Omona (2013), the research typically aimed for a sample size that is sufficient to provide diverse perspectives and insights relevant to the research questions while ensuring that the depth of information obtained from each participant is substantial. The table below projects the initial sample and the interviewed respondents.

Table 4.1: Sample distribution

Departments of CoG	General Employees	Middle Managers	Senior Managers	Total Sample	Interviewed Respondents
Human Resources	5	5	5	15	11
Public Works	5	5	5	15	12
Housing	5	5	5	15	12
Finance	5	5	5	15	10
Total	20	20	20	60	45

4.5.5 Research Instrument: Interview Schedule

The study utilised interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of research respondents, as emphasised in mixed methods research, which is largely anchored on a qualitative inquiry. An interview schedule has a number of strengths, which are related to depth and novelty as far as the various lived experiences of interviewees are concerned. Jamshed (2014) notes that interviews allow the researcher to have flexibility to perform an exploration of the hidden aspects of any research subject, besides offering the researcher an opportunity to interlink the data with research assumptions. The interview schedule was utilised to ensure that there was uniformity, consistency, and validity in the abstraction of data amongst various research subjects (Bearman & Saunders, 2019). In addition to the research schedule, it is clear that interview schedules grant the researcher a significant amount of opportunity to present to the interview participants spontaneous questions that come up within the context of their lived experiences, thus providing the research with a rich, diverse context. The interview schema fulfils the aspect of research rigour, validity and reliability in the extraction of data concerning research participants. The format of the interview includes open-ended questions, which are discussed in the following section.

4.5.6 Open-ended questions

Open ended questions were used in the study since they allow the research participant to express himself or herself freely thus giving meaningful information concerning the research topic. More importantly, Neuert et al. (2021); Hyman and Sierra (2016) agree that the open-ended questions will enable the researcher to know more about the different experiences of the research participants and this will result in a definitive analysis and comprehensive interpretation that will concur with the research topic.

4.6 Data Analysis

4.6.1 NVivo data analysis application

NVivo is a critical tool that immensely contributes to the formulation of hypotheses in qualitative studies. The study used NVivo informed by Marks (2015), cited in Allsop et al. (2022), who contend that the use of NVivo allows for the processing and analysis of a large volume of data, giving ample leverage for the establishment of trends, patterns and connections of emerging themes within the data. Interestingly, Trigueros-Cervantes, Rivera-García and Rivera-Trigueros (2018) posit that NVivo enables the study to develop insightful hypotheses based on thorough data exploration and coding. NVivo also enables the development of well-supported and contextually grounded hypotheses by providing a platform for in-depth data immersion and the ability to compare and contrast

4.7 Reliability

4.7.1 Chi-Square

The chi-square test is quite effective in determining the reliability of the qualitative study. The chi-square test is developed to reveal the details of the connection between two or more categorical variables, so it would be suitable to analyse the qualitative data (Nihan, 2020). The paper also employed chi-square to check the new themes and variables. Singh (2022) states that Chi-Square is also non-parametric; it can examine the connections between variables without presupposing a uniform distribution. This is akin to how often qualitative information will not be distributed normally. The chi-square test adapts well to small samples which is common with qualitative research work (Sandelowski, 1995;179) cited in Mocănașu (2020). According to Rana and Singhal (2015), the Chi-Square can be an easy method of determining whether the frequencies provided in the data are significantly different to those expected. This has the benefit of verifying the reliability and validity of the qualitative results. The chi-square test can also be used to quantify consistency and agreement in qualitative research data. This increases the rigour and reliability in their qualitative study (Daniel, 2016).

4.8 Summary

Concisely, mixed methods research offers an open and versatile way of studying complicated research questions through combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. The use of purposive sampling, open-ended questions, in-depth interviews and complex statistical solutions improved and widened the data collection and data analysis, and it provided richness

and depth in data collection and analysis. Additionally, the application of both mixed methodologies and systems theory offers a sublime view of how to deal with interdisciplinary and connected studies.

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a profound review of mixed-methods research. The review focused on the impact of dovetailing qualitative and quantitative research methods to address complex questions of the research phenomenon. Key to this previous chapter was the notion of purposive sampling, which forms the centrepiece of this largely qualitative inquiry, where specific research participants are selected. It also covered the usefulness of open-ended questions and detailed interviews. Additionally, it talked about using advanced statistical analysis to gather and examine data in a richer and more varied manner. The chapter highlighted how modern research often involves connecting different fields of study, emphasising the complex nature of social science research. This connection is crucial because it shows the underlying philosophical assumptions in the research approach. It also makes us think about how we gain and understand knowledge. This helps us better appreciate the dynamics involved in exploring knowledge.

This chapter primarily focuses on presenting data derived from the field to enable subsequent interpretation in the following chapter. The chapter further explains the transcription, coding, and categorisation processes that underlie the data presentation. Drawing from Ningi (2022), data is systematically presented with the aim of comprehensively revealing all the steps undertaken to ensure the rigour and credibility of the data processing. More importantly, Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021) assert that effective data presentation plays a critical role in conveying information clearly and compellingly to the intended audience. Throughout this chapter, the subsequent presentation of data establishes a solid basis for applying inferential statistics, as the study utilised a mixed-method approach which utilises methodological triangulation (Kotronoulas et al., 2023). Drawing from Golfshani (2003) as cited in Ningi (2022) the study utilised the following data presentation steps:

1. Transcription of data
2. Coding of data
3. Categorisation of data and presentation of data sets
4. Presentation of data to convey information clearly and compellingly
5. Providing firm ground for numerical analysis
6. Providing generic categories for discussion in subsequent chapters

The study expands upon the data presentation provided by Golfshani (2003) to integrate the model with the process of hypothesis testing, aligning with the mixed research approach adopted by the study. The hybrid model is provided below in figure 7.

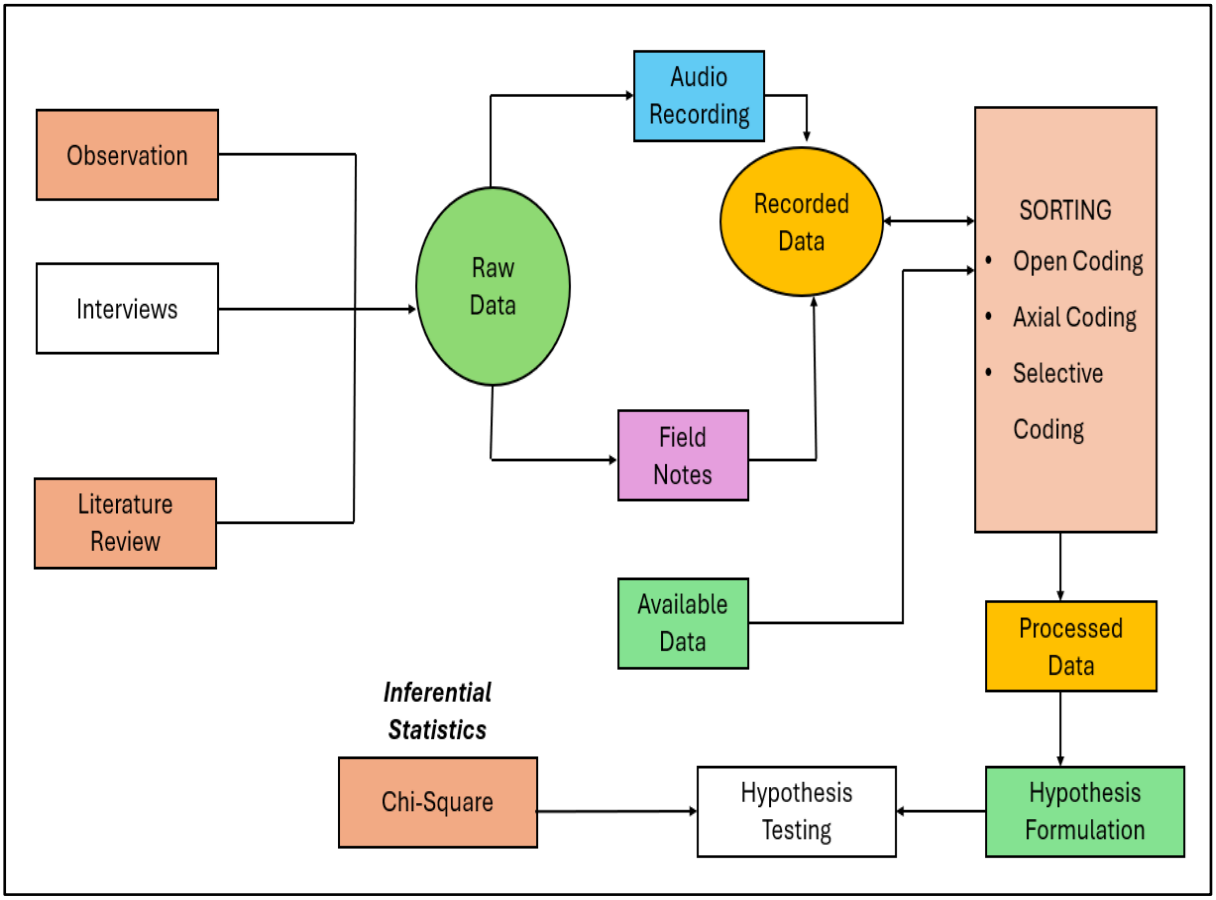

Figure 5.1: Conceptual map of data presentation - (Adapted from: Golfshani, 2003)

Chapter 5 of the thesis focuses on qualitative analysis, while Chapter 6 delves into quantitative analysis, employing the Chi-square statistical inference approach. The chapter commences with a discussion of the data source, which was obtained through purposive sampling.

5.2 Field Description

Before presenting the results of qualitative research, offering a comprehensive field description is crucial. Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) state that a thorough field description is fundamental for understanding the context and environment in which the research was conducted. Furthermore, Ferdinand, Gagani and Gagani (2019) posit that this understanding of the research context enables readers to assess the credibility and applicability of the study findings. Furthermore, Campbell, Loving and Lebel (2014) emphasise that a detailed field description enhances the transparency and reliability of qualitative research, allowing readers

to evaluate the appropriateness of the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data. A thorough field description plays a critical role in qualitative research, as it defines the research context and underpins the rigour and credibility of the subsequent data presentation and analysis. Therefore, a comprehensive field description plays a vital role in qualitative research; it establishes the necessary context and ensures the rigour and credibility of the subsequent data presentation and analysis.

5.2.1 Description of Gweru City Municipality

The administrative hub of Midlands is Gweru City Municipality. It is the province's central administrative and commercial city. It is a convenient entry point for trade and transportation. The urban and peri-urban environment of the municipality is varied, with people residing in residential, commercial, and industrial areas. To accommodate the growing urban populace, Gweru City Municipality provides basic services such as water, sanitation, and infrastructure. It is also historic and its cultural diversity is well established with numerous institutions and attributes that give it a vibrant nature. The six core departments of Gweru City Municipality include housing, town clerk, finance, chamber secretary, and engineering. Employees from these departments have been interviewed in this study, and the findings are presented in the section below.

5.2.2 Interviews and fieldwork

According to Mashuri et al. (2022), interviews and research provide researchers with valuable information, which qualitative researchers can obtain through personal interviews or fieldwork. Interviews enable the researcher to interrogate the lived experiences of research participants with the aim of gaining deeper insight into the research context and illuminating covert aspects of the study. Elhami (1922) argue that qualitative research uses interviews to gather the unique lived experiences of research participants. Interviews may be fully structured or unstructured, depending on the research's objectives. What is the reason for this? Researchers can scrutinise answers more closely, ask follow-up questions, and gain a deeper understanding of participants' thinking processes. Subedi (2024) defined fieldwork as visiting the location where people live and witnessing their interactions. This gives researchers an opportunity to investigate what they are studying and investigating, just like subdividing them into groups.

Table 5.1: Response Rate and Saturation Point

Target Sample	Actual Sample	Response Rate %	Transcription	Saturation Point %
60	53	88.3	45	75

The saturation and response rates are discussed in the subsequent sections. The study documented field observations because these observations form a critical component in the interpretation of data, as argued by Taherdoost (2021).

5.2.2 Field Journal

Observations, research, notes, thoughts regarding certain concepts, and in some cases, experiences, are usually integrated into field journals, according to Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018). The two authors underlined the importance of having field journals. Ciesielska and Jemielniak (2017) posit that researchers can use a field journal to record information and facts that would not be readily obvious or easily recalled. Researchers can even reflect on their study by disseminating their own experiences, observations, and interactions in a field journal. Pandey and Pandey (2021) assert that it's required to confirm the validity of the research and to present all pertinent information. Deggs and Hernandes (2018) state that keeping a field journal offers researchers the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and give meaning to the data obtained. More importantly, in addition to reading literature, it also enables researchers to articulate observations and trends, as well as formulate new research questions or hypotheses. Uwamusi and Ajisebiana (2023), argue that, apart from being evidence-based, a field journal is also an open-source document. Within the field journal, it is easier for others to understand how data were collected and how research conclusions were drawn; therefore, the validity and credibility of research findings are enhanced. Adewole (2021), underscored that research published within a field journal is more genuine and trustworthy. From data collection to analysis, the research process is explained in this section with the objective of enhancing the level of the research. Johnson, Adkins and Chauvin (2020) further contend that a field journal is essential in research since it allows one to document findings after conducting studies for researchers, readers, and facilitates transparency among researchers to the point of research ethics, and offers methodological rigour in conducting research, leading to credibility and quality. The field journal that records the researcher's perspective and where they reside is an important resource. Below is a diagram illustrating the major elements that constitute a field journal as indicated in Figure 5.2.

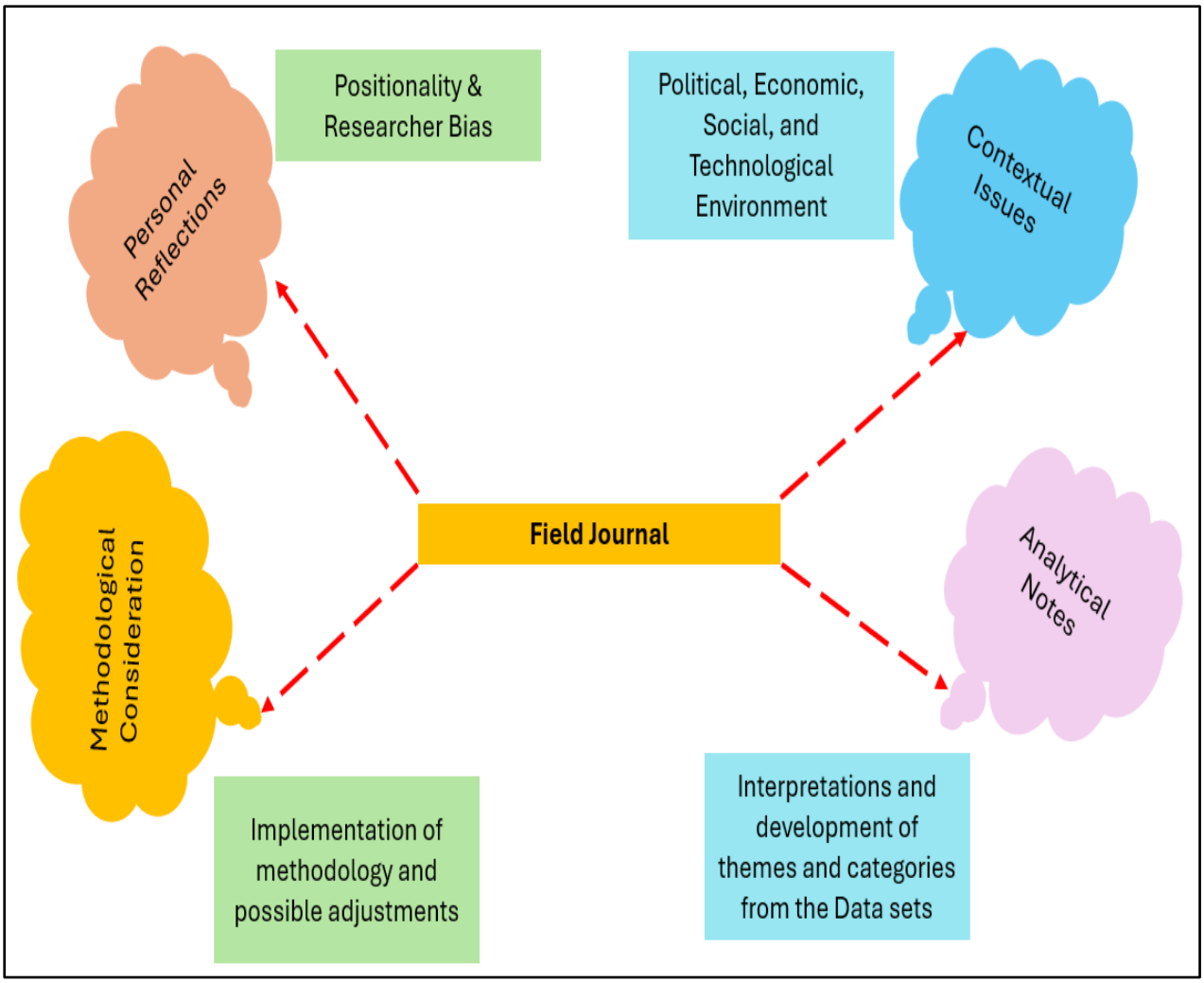

Figure 5. 2 : Field Journal Conceptual Ecology Map

Prior to examining the diverse data sets, it is imperative to thoroughly review the key and underlying principles addressed in the field journal. This preliminary step illuminates the data analysis and interpretation process, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research findings. The research presents personal reflections below to place the research into context and underscore the notion of researcher positionality.

(a) Personal Reflections

A field journal was used to record observations at every stage of data gathering and engagement with the research participants. During my ten years in the public sector, I observed that politicking and canvassing are prevalent due to the conundrum between civil servants and political appointees. Employees were often driven to align with the ruling party under the guise of patriotism. Maintaining a clear separation between government work and political affiliations was challenging, leading to a fragmented

organisational strategy based on party and ethnic divisions. Most employees were unfamiliar with the legal framework governing the public sector, and some individuals took advantage of this lack of knowledge to advance their own interests. Transitioning from the private sector to the public sector was quite a culture shock for me, as the high tensions and political atmosphere were unlike anything I had experienced before. The prevailing environment gave rise to an unrelenting and insatiable urge to methodically investigate the execution of strategic management in response to prominent social precursors.

(b) Contextual Antecedents/ Atmosphere of the Research Field

When I entered the field OF research, participants were observed exhibiting their usual reluctance to share information, due to the strict laws of nondisclosure that regulate the public sector. Besides this, there was a general aura of suspicion created by the highly politicised environment in which they worked. On closer inspection, it was evident that employees in the local government were struggling to distinguish their mandate from that of the Local Government Minister and department in the approval of strategic planning activities like the budget and the manner of spending money. The political environment of the country was mirrored in the observable tensions between various sectors within the local council. In addition, the historical ethnic conflicts in Zimbabwe cast a long shadow over issues of justice, fairness, and tolerance, thus impeding the effective use of strategic management. More importantly, the financial climate posed a stern obstacle for the local council to motivate employees.

(c) Analytical Notes from observation

The fieldwork comprised 6 data sets that yielded incremental knowledge and insights into the research phenomenon. In brief, the analysis of the 6 data sets unveiled several social antecedents that underpin the implementation of strategic management in the municipality of Gweru. The complete process of the emergence of these concepts in the data analysis is exhaustively presented in the subsequent sections, which systematically discuss the development of different codes and categories. Additionally, a conceptual map below demonstrates the distillation of these concepts.

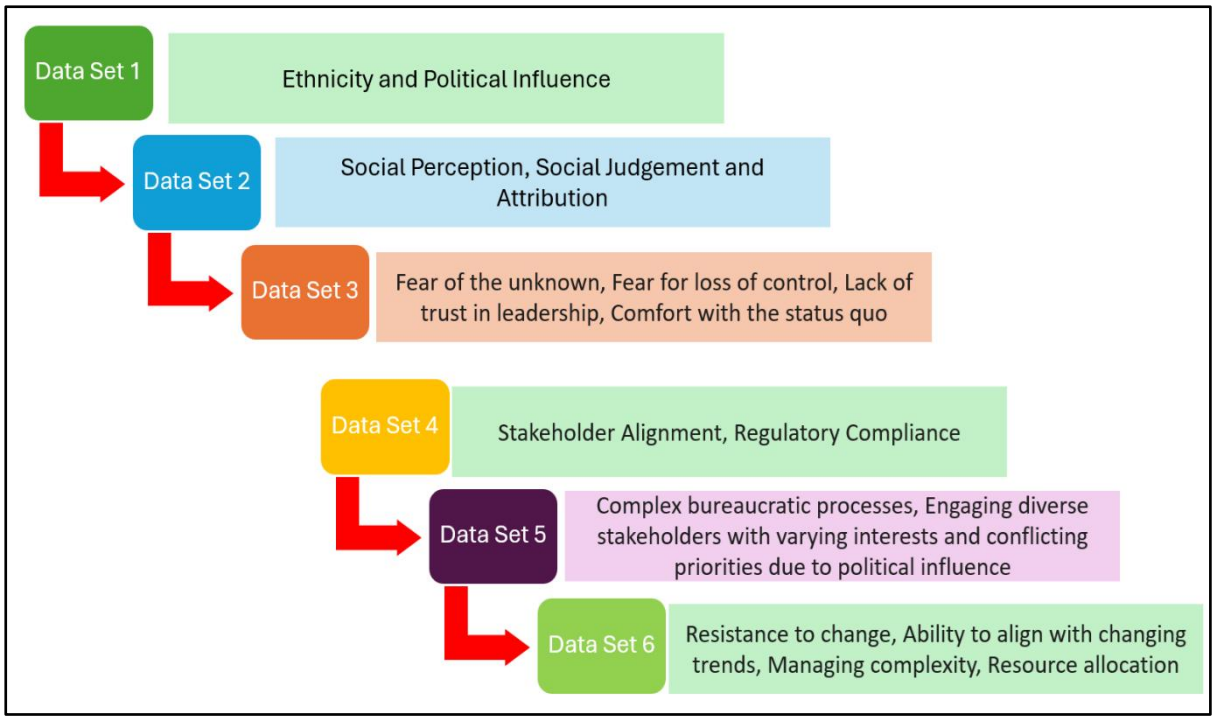

Figure 5.3: Data Sets process map

(d) Methodological Considerations

I did not implement any methodological adjustments during the data collection and analysis process, as I employed mixed methods. Only a few questions were modified in response to emerging concepts derived from the data sets.

As cited in Taherdoost (2021), Dewi (2022), and Sharma (2023), the process of data collection through the interview is based on multiple steps that account for the integrity and richness in the data. An adequate preparation is required, and it is necessary to plan how the interview will be done, e.g., setting the type of interview (structured, semi-structured or unstructured) according to the research purposes. In addition, Madhuri et al. (2022) specify that after the first step, there is a concise and brief planning phase. In this regard, an interview guide or interview questions may be prepared to ensure the discussion remains open-ended and covers all the key issues. In addition, while interviewing the respondents, active listening must be exercised and more information must be inquired about with respect to understanding what has been said by the interviewers. Significantly, McMullin (2023) argues that there should be proper coding and transcription practised after conducting interviews in order to classify and sort data obtained accordingly. Finally, because transcription is qualitative research, the data will have to be synthesised and reported in a manner summarising the significant interview findings. Steps in data collection are shown below in Figure 10.

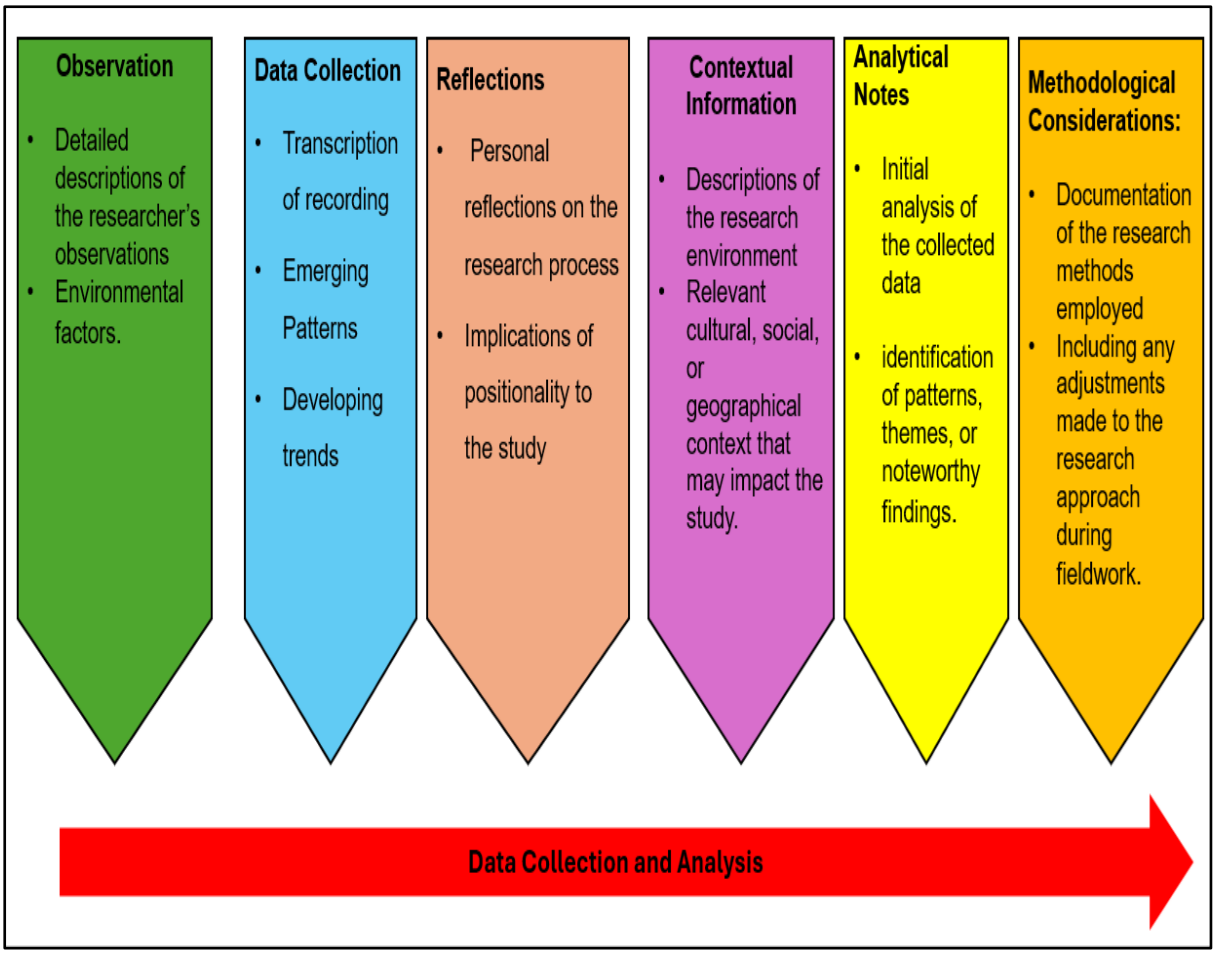

Figure 5.4: Data collection and analysis

5.3 Data Cycles

Paradis *et al.* (2016) asserts that data cycles (data collection rounds) enhance the depth, accuracy and precision of data analysis in qualitative data. Rapley (2013) asserts that the early rounds or data cycles allow the researcher to get a rough idea of the phenomenon, and refine the ways of asking questions, or sample work with subsequent rounds or cycles. Mcleod, Macdonell and Doolin (2014) argues that iterative rounds contribute to one being able to explore change by time or experience stages that cannot be captured on a single snapshot

More importantly Naeem *et al.*, 2024) argues that multiple rounds enable the researcher to arrive at a saturation state that is more systematised and the subsequent rounds in which the data cycle is getting smaller provide more confidence in the exhaustion of the data analysis. Zahle (2021) states that research data cycles are necessary as qualitative research data cycles are units of analysis and measurement of the research participant's lived experience that allow the researcher to access the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation. On the contrary, Ugwu, and Eze Val (2023) posit that qualitative research focuses more on the

non-numerical data and social behavioural phenomena compared to numerical data and statistical procedures as in quantitative research.

Additionally, Dawadi (2020) asserts that Qualitative data may be collected from a variety of sources, including interviews, field notes, audiotapes or videotapes of conversations, photographs, among other documents. All these diverse forms of data allow researchers to represent more accurately by making it possible for them to describe diverse aspects more accurately. In addition, Sutton and Austin (2015) uncover that qualitative research aims to portray the nature of human experiences, activities, and social relationships, which are multifaceted. This integrative approach is required when handling the intricate social world, and thus giving a wider picture of most social phenomena. The research illustrates the following 6 data sets and gives a detailed foundation for data analysis in Chapter 6.

5.3.1 Data Set Cycle 1

The codes used in the study are indicated in Table 3 below

Table 5.2: Codes of respondents

Code	Description
SMHR	Senior Manager Human Resources
MMHR	Mid-Manager Human Resources
GEHR	General Employee Human Resources
SMHS	Senior Manager Housing
MMHS	Mid Manager Housing
GEHS	General Employee Housing
SMF	Senior Manager Finance
MMF	Mid-Manager Finance
GEF	General Employee Finance

In the first data cycle, I interviewed five research participants, whose demographic details are indicated in Table 4 below.

Table 5.3: Details of respondents in the Data Cycle 1

Code Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Department
SMHR2	42	Female	Shona	Human Resources
SMF1	53	Male	Shona	Finance
MMHS1	41	Male	Shona	Housing
MMHS2	32	Male	Shona	Housing
MMHR1	39	Female	Shona	Human Resources

Data set 1 produced 27 open codes as indicated in the NVivo 15-generated table.

Table 5.4: Data Cycle 1 Code Book

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Central government policies	The Central Government includes all policies and measures defined by the state in order to organise and control the activities and services that are conducted for the general public. Such policies seek to impact and improve areas such as the economy, healthcare, education, and the security of the nation. These policies affect the daily lives of the people and are put into operation by means of laws, procedures, and administrative measures. However, there was clear evidence of interference of the central government in local government matters.	5	40
Colonial Legacy	The term "colonial legacy" encompasses the lasting effects and traces of colonialism on the political, social, economic, and cultural existence of previously colonised nations. Colonial-shaped political systems, social inequalities, and colonial-shaped identities are some of the forms this legacy may take. The colonial legacy was	5	66

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	actualised through the apparent prevalence of political elites and political beneficiaries who divided the municipality		
Post-Colonial Effect	The political, social, and economic effects that still exist in society since colonialism was dismantled are known as the "post-colonial effect." The colonial era was riddled with Such inequalities as cultural identity, and the legacy of the erstwhile colonial masters is still visible in the society. Since countries are unable to extricate themselves from the colonial past of inequality and procedural injustice. This background presents a complex web of current and inherent social challenges. The social order under colonialism presented a fragmented society that is still struggling to unite the masses.	5	87
Rule-Orientated Culture	An organisation founded on a rule-based culture believes in its formal written policies, procedures, and rules. Consistency is a virtue for it, as is structure and predictability. It tends to make employees feel secure and stable. While it may make them more productive and obedient, it may limit innovation and adaptability if rigidly followed.	4	30
council budgetary provisions	The financial allotments and policies set by a local government council to efficiently manage its resources and expenses within a specific fiscal period are called council budgetary provisions. However, the budget	5	38

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	is set according to the directive of the Minister of Local Government.		
Divergent Interests	The organisation has individuals with divergent interests and personal, professional, or ideological goals and priorities, which could lead to incompatibility or disagreements among people or groups. These differences in decision-making and bonding may be brought about by divergence in background, life experience, or standards of morality.	5	72
Economic Context	Economic contexts include the enclosure of the economic conditions and factors that impinge on things, such as inflation, employment patterns, and general economic expansion. Recognising these circumstances helps with decision-making, policy, or trend analyses in the economy in a broader framework.	5	55
Ethnic and Tribal Division	Ethnic and tribal division is the separation of groups within society based on the different ethnic identities and traditions that they have, which have led to differences in language, customs, and values of the people in Africa. Such gaps can become causes of quarrels, discrimination, or even conflict when groups try to outdo each other in getting shares in the resources or tics, which can cause problems in the stability and harmony of the society.	4	46

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Internal and External Politics	Internal politics refers to the dynamics and power struggles within an organisation or state, while external politics involves the relationships and interactions between different organisations or states. Organisational studies have clearly indicated that there is more of internal politics as compared to external politics.	5	120
Language Differences	Language differences are about unique structures, vocabularies, and sounds that define different languages. These variations can affect how people communicate and understand each other. Sometimes, they create hurdles in translating and interpreting because the cultural subtleties and contextual meanings do not always match up between languages.	5	32
Management by objectives	Management by Objectives (MBO) is a strategic approach that seeks to enhance an organisation's performance by setting clear goals that both managers and employees agree on. This method encourages a feeling of ownership and responsibility as team members strive to meet specific, measurable objectives within a designated period.	5	20
Operational tasks.	Operational tasks are the everyday activities and processes that organisations carry out to keep things running smoothly and effectively. These tasks encompass routine responsibilities like production,	4	20

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	customer service, and inventory management, which are crucial for meeting the organisation's broader goals.		
Political Fragmentation	Political fragmentation occurs when political authority and power are split among competing groups or entities. This division often brings about instability and hinders effective governance. It can arise from a mix of differing ideologies, regional interests, or an inability to reach an agreement on important issues, all of which complicate the decision-making process within a political system.	5	16
Pressure Groups and Civil Society	Pressure groups are organised individuals who aim to sway public policy and decision-making to meet specific objectives or advocate for particular interests. Civil society includes a diverse array of organisations and associations that operate outside of government and business. This encompasses non-profits, advocacy groups, and community organisations, all of which work to encourage social and political change while involving citizens in civic engagement.	4	22
Social Background	Social background refers to the social circumstances and environment in which an individual is reared. These are issues like family earnings, education, cultural values, and their family dynamics. These can determine an individual's potential,	5	40

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	outlook, and capacity to move further up the social ladder.		
Biographic Differences	Biographic differences are really the unique life and background of individuals that make us unique human beings. These include aspects such as age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and education. These differences can go a long way in determining how individuals perceive the world, behave, and respond to each other in given settings.	5	25
Patriarchy	Patriarchy is a social arrangement where men hold power to their maximum potential, exercising control over politics, moral authority, societal advantages and land ownership. Under this framework, women are typically excluded from critical roles, and this perpetuates the gender disparities in the various spheres of life.	4	28
Social Dynamics	Social dynamics concern the interdependence of people and groups within social structures, which can shape behaviour patterns and societal transformations over time. Organisational social structures reflect the notion of interdependence since job roles are interrelated and also mostly rely on communication.	4	25
Stakeholders and strategic partners.	Individuals or teams within an organisation can also impact a number of institutional social artefacts, like policies and decision-	4	18

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	making. Strategic allies collaborate to attain common goals, combining resources, intelligence, and networks to enhance the strength of the competition and attain greater mutual benefits in the organisation..		
Strategic Human Resources,	Strategic Human Resources integrates human resource management practices with organisational goals and objectives to drive business success. Proactively managing talent, culture, and organisational development is the key to creating a competitive advantage in the market.	4	10
Strategic Planning	Strategic planning is the process of defining an organisation's purpose and determining how to allocate resources to achieve that purpose.	4	38
Data-driven decision making	Data-Driven decision-making (DDDM) is a decision-making strategy from data interpretation and analysis and not experience and intuition. It entails the gathering of the correct data, its analysis to uncover insights, and translation of the insights into business strategy and operational procedures. Empirical evidence will enable organisations to improve accuracy, reduce risks, and make better and informed decisions.	4	17
Structural Dynamics	The way an organisation's structure, including roles, responsibilities, and	4	15

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	communication channels, shapes its members' behaviour is known as organisational structural dynamics. This concept also encompasses how changes in structure, such as changes to the hierarchy or team composition, can affect decision-making, collaboration and overall organisational effectiveness.		
Cultural Values and Norms	Culture is the basis for all actions and decisions within a society or group. Norms, standardised expectations and behaviours that dictate how individuals should act in different social situations result from these values.	5	22
Hierarchical Structure	The organisational design of a pyramid form in which groups and people are ranked with respect to authority, responsibility, and power is referred to as 'hierarchy'. The structure allows for clearly structured roles and responsibilities within the organisation, from top management to line workers, without any ambiguity about how they would be conveyed or calculated.	5	24
SWOT Analysis	SWOT analysis identifies and assesses an organisation's Strengths, Weaknesses (SWOT), Opportunities, and Threats. By examining these four elements, companies can gain insight into their internal capabilities and external environment. Organisations can use this analysis to maximise their potential, address	4	18

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	weaknesses, capitalise on opportunities, and mitigate potential threats.		
Technological Front	The forefront of technological progress and innovation is known as the "technical front" in many industries. The latest tools, processes and systems that improve productivity in the market are included in this technology which ensures increased efficiency and productivity within the organisation.	5	25

The study sought to better understand some of the codes that emerged from the data analysis by systematically comparing the interview transcripts. This technique aimed to identify commonalities and coherence between the current codes. The comparison of data scripts enables the study to derive an emerging narrative from the data, as argued by Kothari (2004), as cited in Alem (2020). Based on the prior argument, research presents an analysis of 2 interview transcripts using NVivo 15.

When asked the following question, research participant MMHR1 gave the following response. **Question**: ***In your own observation and experience, what is the role of informal structures in the implementation of strategic management within your organisation?***

> *A thorough review of the strategic management in the Municipality of Gweru, reveals that informal structures and social networks have a major role in influencing and shaping the organisational processes. These informal organisations co-exist with the formal systems of management and it is a dynamic interaction which have positive and negative results.*
>
> *Since informal structures usually support the communication and work of the employees, they contribute to the improvement of the efficiency of routine tasks. The unofficial networks facilitate rapid exchange of information and problem-solving, which are positive factors that contribute to accomplishing the task. Formal channels at given times may be sluggish due to bureaucratic steps and meetings, therefore informal relationships may result in faster decision-making and mobilisation of resources. On*

the other hand, the use of informal structures often results in discrepancies in the performance of duties because not every employee will follow the official procedures. It usually causes a range of service delivery challenges and confusion of the expectations of the key deliverables..

On the other hand, I can report that formal structures encourage personal ownership and dedication to work, as in the case of management by objectives (MBO) where informal structures are involved. The positive impact will be increased through motivation and alignment to organisational goals because people often feel that they belong to their colleagues and are more invested in the group goals. However, informal groups usually create the problem of ambiguity in terms of accountability and performance measures. In case the objectives are spread informally, some employees may not get the same information, resulting in gaps in interpretation and adherence to the goals established by formal management.

The policy of the central government has a great influence on the strategic framework in terms of which the Municipality operates, and informal structures serve as the mediating factor in terms of the reception and implementation of these policies at the local level. On the positive side, informal channels are used as a platform on which the policy changes can be discussed and interpreted and informal structures subsequently make staff more ready for new rules. Workmates exchange knowledge or experiences that may lead to an in-depth comprehension of the implications in the policy. However, negative effects are usually experienced when there is abuse of unofficial networks designed to defeat official instructions and this often results in inconsistencies in policy implementation and compliance problems.

Another aspect is that the informal structures are two-sided in nature specifically in terms of engagement with stakeholders and strategic partners. There are positive factors, such as the establishment of good relations, that support the ability to collaborate and share resources. Informal communication helps build trust and relationships among the parties involved as well as creating richer partnerships as well as joint projects that will be beneficial to the Municipality. However, the danger of such informal networks is that one may shut out certain stakeholders or end up forming cliques that may not reflect the various interests of the organisation. This may sabotage larger participation processes and result in lost inclusivity and mutual gain.

Budgetary provisions in councils are a very important aspect of strategic management and the informal structures may play a role in prioritisation of the resources. Casual communication between employees can bring positive outcomes in terms of new ideas on budgetary allocation and efficiency of spending, which might result in better financial management. Another downside usually arises when informal groups influence the budgetary discussions to favour specific interests or groups instead of using transparent and fair guidelines to allocate resources. These prejudices can continue Inequalities and reduce the effectiveness of the entire strategic financial planning process.

Finally, the social background of the community has a significantly important influence in the development of both the formal and informal structures in the Municipality. Informal networks tend to mirror the social processes within the society. offering a channel through which employees can be engaged and supported. On a positive note, this can improve community sensitivity and make sure that the efforts of the municipalities have a cultural fit and the community adopts the social needs of the community. Nevertheless, social inequalities may also be enhanced by the informal structures, where certain groups are considered in making decisions, which may marginalise communities and weaken the community.

Although informal structures and social networks in the Municipality may increase the effectiveness of strategic management through the establishment of collaboration, communication, and innovation, the interplay of the informal structures and strategic planning provides challenges that have to be navigated. The key to furthering an inclusive vision of local governance lies in the understanding of the dual role of these informal entities so that the interplay between formal and informal dynamics aligns to the interests of the community.

When asked the same question as above, research participant MMHS2 gave the following response.

As an employee of the Gweru Municipality, I observed that informal structures and social networks are very critical in the process of implementing strategic management. These structures tend to be used in conjunction with formal hierarchies, which influence the manner in which the policies are implemented and the decisions are made.

Pressure groups and civil society organisations are also informal groups that promote the interests of the community. Their intervention can also drive the organisation to focus on some strategic goals that respond to the interests of the community and therefore have an effect on the management strategies.

Social dynamics in the organisation have huge influence on strategic management. Interpersonal relationships between employees can be based on trust or competition. Unfortunately, competition can either help or hinder cooperation. These networks tend to breed informal leaders who affect the perception of others and make them accept the strategic initiatives.

The informal power structures tend to be based on internal politics of the organisation. The internal politics has two extreme ends, it may either support or oppose the strategic objectives because individuals may identify themselves with some of the factions or leaders depending on their personal interests. Also, changes in the priorities of an organisation is influenced by outside political influences making strategic management more difficult.

It is also important to know the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of informal networks. To give an example, good connections with the community can be an asset, whereas internal conflicts can be damaging to strategic goals. Interaction with these informal networks may yield informative pieces of information about which a SWOT analysis is to be done. Informal structures may be developed in a politically fragmented environment where formal institutions do not work. This may create diverse interpretations of strategic objectives, thus resulting in difficulties in directing the whole organisation to a shared vision.

Informal structures are also affected by the local economy. During economic downturns, informal networks can get stronger as people tend to find equals and allies among them, which significantly affects the organisational strategies that are supposed to guarantee the growth of the community.

The formal structure of our organisation are both rigid and flexible hence it can enhance or suppress the power of informal networks. A bureaucratic structure can suppress informal communication, but a more open one can foster cooperation and the exchange of strategic ideas. The people in the organisation usually possess divergent interests depending on different aspects, which include socioeconomic backgrounds. Such interests may influence the perception and prioritisation of strategic initiatives and require a subtle approach in the process of implementation.

Finally, the colonialism legacy in Zimbabwe still has impacts on social and organisational dynamics. The historical inequality is reflected in informal networks, affecting the relations of power and the interaction in making the decisions, which is often contrary to the strategic goals of the organisation.

Finally, social networks and informal structures are critical in strategic management in the municipality of Gweru. They have a complex impact, and the acknowledgement of their contribution can result in a more efficient and inclusive strategy implementation.

Figure 5.5 below is an ecological comparative map for the two transcripts.

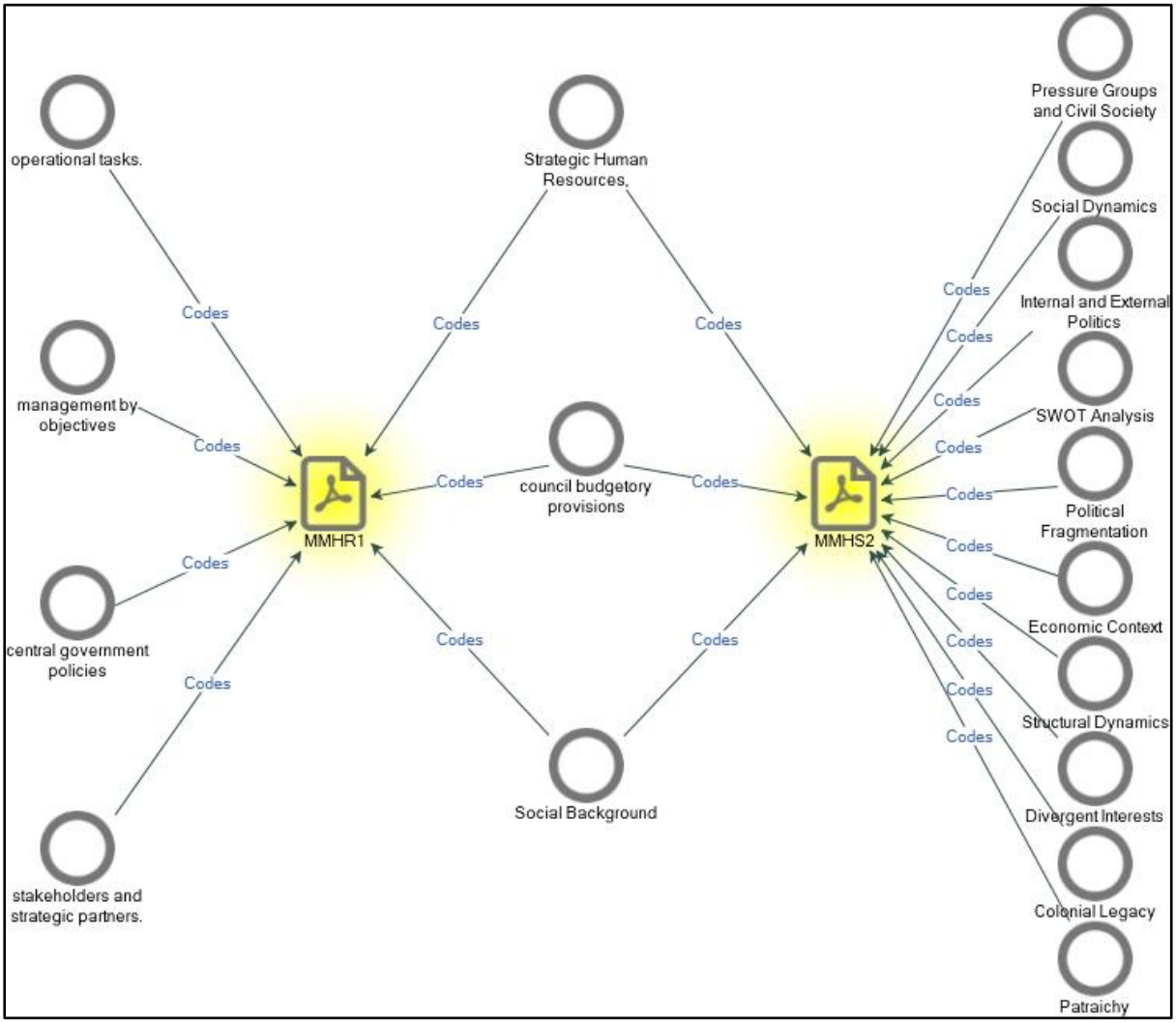

Figure 5.5: Comparison of MMHR1 and MMHS2 interview transcript

A comparison of the 2 interview transcripts demonstrates an emerging narrative, as indicated in the summary below.

5.3.2 Summary of Data Set 1

The data investigates the intricate connection between organisational politics and ethnicity and the data also reveals how such factors affect the dynamics of staff at the Gweru City Council, from analysis of the response from interviews. More importantly, the prior observation agrees with the assertion of Muiruri (2023), who claims that ethnic roots are likely to affect assumptions of power, decision-making arrangements and interpersonal relationships in the workplace. The social origins of the perception of power are a fundamental key to organisational strategic management. More importantly, the social antecedents of the African context, like patriarchy, political power, ethnic diversity, cultural values and social norms, are critical components of complex social normative dynamics. Empirical evidence indicates that ethnicity, as Ahmed (2019), tends to shape people's approach to organisational politics and impacts collaboration, communication, and work culture in general. Moreover, members have also cited how organisational politics can exacerbate ethnic differences at times, leading to tensions and a discrimination-supporting culture that compromises career advancement and shrinks the space for professional development. This data set supplies facts regarding the intricate relationship between ethnicity and organisational politics. It provided insight into the positioning of these variables and how they impact organisational culture and employee experience. The policy implications of the findings are significant in the policy-making for the attainment of an inclusive workplace and the management of diversity while reducing the adverse consequences of politicised encounters. The summary is a brief appraisal of the dataset, providing a high-level overview of data cycle 2.

5.4 Dataset Cycle 2

In the second data set, I interviewed four participants: two males and two females. The table below shows some of the research participants' biographic details.

Figure 5.6: Data Cycle 2 respondents

Code Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Department
SMHR1	38	Female	(Shona)	Human Resources
SMF2	41	Male	Chewa	Finance
MMHS1	33	Male	Ndebele	Housing
MMHS3	37	Female	Tonga	Housing

The table created by NVivo 15 indicates that data set 2 had 11 subsumed codes. The table below contains the file number and frequency with which the codes occurred in the interview scripts. The codes decreased significantly as the majority were merged into single codes. This was achieved to simplify coming up with themes or categories as argued by Willig (2013) in Brailas, Tragou, and Papachristopoulos (2023). By reducing the dataset and accelerating data analysis, subsumption codes in qualitative interviewing enable the discovery of big patterns and themes. This is achieved with the view of making findings more transparent and enabling researchers' capacity to concentrate on what truly matters, which is to achieve improved results and communication of accurate analysis. Additionally, combining codes can raise more significant associations of meanings, and this would help us better understand what participants experienced and how they perceived things.

Figure 5. 7: Data Cycle 2 Code Book

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Social Context	Social context refers to the environment and circumstances that influence individuals and groups and includes their relationships, cultural norms, and societal expectations. It plays a crucial role in shaping behaviour, communication and interactions in both personal and professional environments.	4	25
Fragmentation	Organisational fragmentation is organisational division and disunity, which usually is fostered due to ineffective communication and coordination between departments or groups. It is likely to introduce inefficiency, less cooperation and more heterogeneous company culture, which ultimately impacts organisational effectiveness and performance.	4	18

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Intra-organisational structure	Intra-organisational culture shapes the inner structuring and coordination of roles, responsibilities, and members within a corporation. It is the way in which numerous departments, teams, and people interact and cooperate with every different stakeholder in an effort to satisfy the desires and strategic goals of the corporation, due to the vision and mission of the corporation.	4	16
Organisational Culture	Organisational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and behaviours that shape how members of an organisation interact and work together. It influences the overall work environment, affecting everything from employee motivation to decision-making processes that underpin the operation of the organisation.	2	10
Organisational Politics	Organisational politics involves exercising power and influence in an organisation to attain individual or career aspirations, usually by negotiation, persuasion, and relationship-building aimed at building collaboration. Organisational politics can affect decision-making, resource allocation, and workplace culture and sometimes cause conflict or closure	2	12
organisational structure	Organisational structure is the official coordination of work, responsibilities, and relationships within an organisation and it decides the delegation and coordination of activities to achieve its objectives.	4	15

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	Organisational structure controls the flow of information and decision-making and has implications for efficiency and effectiveness in goal attainment.		
Social Attribution	Social attribution in the organisational setting is the process through which employees perceive the behaviour and intentions of their colleagues and senior managers. Social attribution influences the employees' perception of company dynamics, affects interpersonal relations, and determines overall cooperation and communication within the organisation.	4	18
Social Bonds	Social bonds within an organisational setting are interpersonal and binding relations that workers create that induce feelings of belongingness, and also trigger cooperation. They facilitate cooperation, simplify communication, and lead to effective working conditions, finally resulting in better overall productivity and morale.	4	14
Social Judgement	Social judgment in an organisational context refers to the ability of individuals to assess and interpret the behaviours, intentions, and emotions of their colleagues. It plays a crucial role in decision-making, collaboration, and conflict resolution, influencing how well team members understand and interact with one another.	3	16

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Social Perception	Social perception in the context of work accounts for the manner in which individuals perceive and interpret their peers' and leaders' actions, intentions, and emotions in the workplace. Social perception matters in the description of individuals' relationships, encouraging cooperation, and describing organisational culture and performance.	3	12
Sociological needs	Sociological needs from an organisational perspective refer to the requirements individuals have for social interaction, belonging, and collaboration within a workplace. Meeting these needs fosters a sense of community, enhances teamwork, and ultimately contributes to a more engaged and productive workforce.	4	15

Through NVivo 2 randomly picked interview transcripts were analysed to surface the underlying and common concepts in a bid to have a clearly defined narrative that emerges from data.

When asked the following question, research participant MMHS3 gave the following response.
Question: ***What are the social norms that underpin the operation of informal structures in strategic planning?***

> *When considering the issue of the social norms, which inform the work of informal structures in the process of strategic planning, one must look at several aspects that go hand in hand, such as sociological needs, social bonds, fragmentation, problem-solving, organisational structure, social judgment and social attribution. All these are major factors that influence the development of the informal networks and the effects it has on the strategic planning processes in the Gweru municipality.*

Informal structures are usually created due to the inherent sociological needs of people to belong and associate with other people. These needs help to create informal groups or networks in the context of strategic planning which later affect the decision making process. The workers can also cross-exchange, give insights, and join efforts on projects without formal hierarchies, which can result in the development of a participatory culture that can increase overall contribution to the strategic planning.

Social connections in the informal network may also greatly influence the success of strategic planning. Stable relationships between workers tend to translate into trust, free communication, and readiness to share knowledge. Such connections can make the work of the departments more cooperative and offer the ability to locate the general goals, thereby making sure that the strategic schemes are well-informed due to the various points of view and experiences in the company.

Though the informal structures are usually considered to be positive, informal structures may also lead to fragmentation in an organisation. When various informal networks give more focus to their agendas or have silos, that may create a failure in the cohesion in strategic planning efforts. The fragmentation may lead to duplication of efforts or even conflicting strategies, which is why it is of great significance to incorporate these informal voices into a consistent strategy framework.

The informal networks can be incredibly useful as problem-solving forums in which people unite to solve the problem together. Such networks can be used in strategic planning to help in brainstorming and the creation of innovative solutions, which would not be generated in restrictive formal structures. The informal interactions are participatory, hence enabling differences in opinions and this might result in more holistic and innovative solutions to the various problems that may affect the municipality.

Formal organisational structures together with informal networks play an important role in determining strategic outcomes. Although formal structures offer much-needed protocols and guidelines, informal networks are quicker to adjust to the new circumstances and allow more flexibility in the planning processes. This duality also enables organisations to exploit the best of both , such that strategic planning is sound as well as sensitive to local contexts.
The social judgment is also influenced by informal networks since the members of a group tend to carry with them the values and norms and apply them in making

decisions. Such common understandings may influence the process of strategic choices assessment and prioritisation. Getting knowledge of the social judgments that are ubiquitous in informal structures can enable leaders to be ready to meet some resistance or support to different strategic initiatives and accordingly adjust their strategies.

Social attribution describes how people perceive and interpret the behaviours of other people, which can also have a considerable impact on the results of strategic planning. I have observed that managers may give their colleagues motivations and competencies depending on how they interact with them. Positive attributions are capable of promoting cooperation and inviting people to take part in strategic projects, while negative attributions can damage collaboration and cause obstacles to proper planning.

Finally, informal structures of the Gweru municipality show that social norms influence the process of strategic planning in a complex manner. Municipal leaders are able to tap into informal networks in enhancing their strategic planning efforts through the identification and realisation of the power of sociological needs, social bonds, fragmentation, problem-solving, organisational structure, social judgment and social attribution. Incorporation of these areas into the strategic framework will not only facilitate inclusiveness but also develop creative solutions to suit the local needs of the society.

When asked the same question as above, research participant MMHS2 gave the following response.

Different social norms play a vital role in determining the course of operation of informal structures in strategic planning and these can be analysed in different aspects like contextual antecedents, cultural significance, psychological needs, communication networks, and social perception.

Contextual antecedents are embedded in the historical and social contexts of Gweru which are instrumental in informal structures. The socio-economic stability of the region, historical experiences of governance and local traditions have a role to play in the way informal networks are formed and operate. As an example, when an ineffective history of formal planning processes exists, the residents may depend more on informal systems to express their grievances and offer ideas on how to solve them.

Cultural Significance: In Gweru, cultures influence group behaviours and values in societies. Informal structures are usually associated with indigenous culture and communalism, in which the decision-making process is communal and the opinion of the community is held dear. These cultural aspects are important in creating trust and unity among the people of the community thus making the implementation of strategic planning more effective, as it is able to incorporate the local knowledge and practices into the official practices.

Psychological Needs: Belonging, recognition, and empowerment are also considered psychological needs that are connected to the functioning of informal structures. People join such networks in order to achieve the desire to be socially connected and impacted. Unless individuals feel that their voices are respected and heard in the informal environments, they will be more likely to be involved in the processes of strategic planning, thus adding value to the plans with the different kinds of perspectives which will regard the needs of the communities.

Communication Networks: The informal structures also flourish on communication networks which in most cases go beyond the formalised structures of organisations. With such networks, it is possible to spread information, feedback, and local insights swiftly, and a discussion on strategic priorities can occur. The fact that these networks are easily available usually gives people in the community a better engagement in their planning activities and enables identification of urgent matters that require to be aken care of.

Social Perception: The socially held perception about informal and formal structures influences the success of the society. When the residents consider informal networks as legitimate and responsive, there is a high probability that they will participate in such structures, hence making a positive contribution to strategic planning. On the other hand, when the community lacks faith in formal structures because of previous failures or elitism, they may be encouraged to rely more on informal networks, which might be problematic in case such networks are not highly integrated in official planning systems.

Overall, the interactions between these points are how informal structures and social networks play a crucial role in the processes of strategic planning in Gweru. They make sure local voices are taken into consideration and plans are not a top-down one but

also one that takes into account the actual needs and desires of the community. Strategic planners can develop better and sustainable outcomes by recognising through these informal networks and using them.

The aforementioned responses are articulated within a conceptual comparative framework constructed using NVivo software.

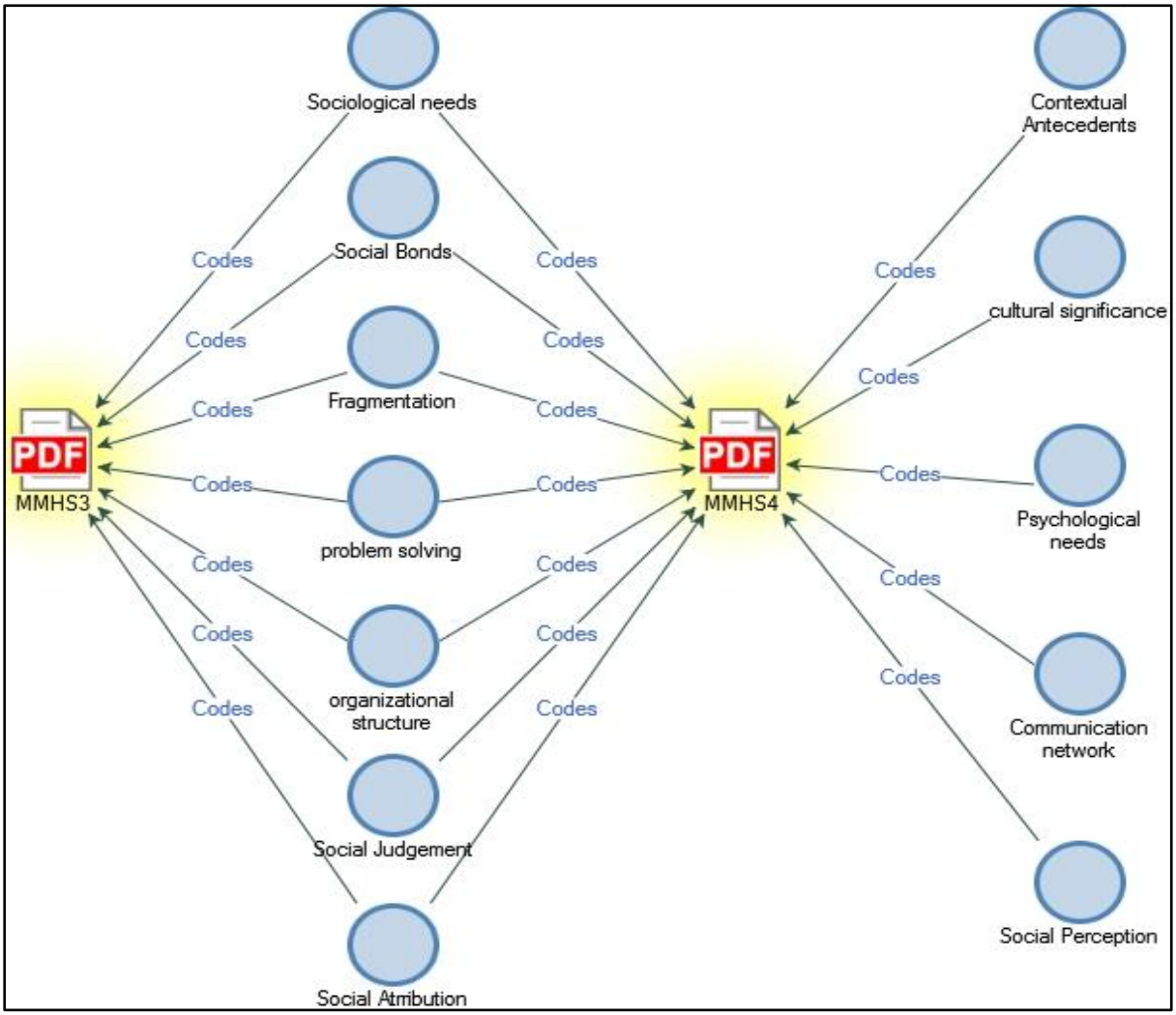

Figure 5. 8: Comparison of MMHS3 and MMHS4 Interview Scripts

By yielding the conclusions which were derived from both transcripts which were analysed, this study provides an enriching background which catches the subtle meanings of what the conclusions transmit. Through intensive analysis of the participant's answer, we show surface evidence and a philosophical rationale that prompts reflection on the human condition. The story is a gateway to a deeper understanding, inviting explanation in rendering the character

and significance of the subject. Discussion of meaning dependence on context facilitates the academic argument over the theoretical as well as practical implications of such discoveries.

5.4.1 Summary of Data Cycle 2

A content analysis of this data cycle's interview transcripts produced an interesting pattern of emerging codes, which showed intriguing concerns. Findings regarding strategic management at the Gweru Municipality are that there are inevitable sociological needs that are required in making a good environment, employee motivation, and appealing to the organisational strategic direction. The above assumptions concur with the literature, as is evident in the assumption by Lai and Lin (2017), who hold the view that an organisation is a social system. Thirdly, based on the body of knowledge under review and as is evident in the reviewed literature, Nikiforova (2022) holds the view that where social relations among workers are positive, teamwork and collaboration are enhanced, and strategic programmes are implemented more effectively.

However, as previously argued by Chigora (2018), organisational fragmentation is very difficult because it will naturally result in uncoordinated effort beyond the strategic objectives of the municipality. The information also showed, as argued by Karla et al. (2022), problem-solving as being central to addressing the complex challenges faced within the organisation, and team work coupled with good social relations could be the solution. Gweru municipality organisation should have an organisational structure that will facilitate timely decision-making and communication, as highly advocated by Schinagl and Paans (2017). Literature, as presented by Wilson et al. (2022) reveals that social judgment is one of the mechanisms through which workers and leaders assess risk as well as opportunities and consequently the entire strategic direction of the municipality.

Moreover, the findings concurred with Mapfumo and Mutereko's (2020) assertion that social attribution identifies how much the employees attribute meaning to the cause of' the decisions of management. The findings also revealed that exposure to a harmonious working environment that attends to sociological demands is critical to employee morale and retention, resulting in a stable workforce for strategic management interventions. Analysis of data revealed that fragmentation can be controlled by hybrid strategies where each and every department draws from one shared organisational vision, ultimately leading to improved outputs. More importantly, social relations formed can be leveraged to implement more effective strategic management at Gweru Municipality and provide adequate resources for its

people. In addition to the emerging themes in data cycle two, which are not yet covered, the study presents data Cycle 3 below.

5.5 Data Cycle 3

In the third data cycle, I interviewed 10 research participants, the demographic details of whom are indicated in the table below.

Table 5.5: Data Cycle 3 respondents

Code Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Department
SMHR3	47	Female	Shona	Human Resources
SMF3	42	Male	Ndebele	Finance
GEHS1	32	Male	Shona	Housing
GEF1	28	Male	Ndebele	Finance
GEHR1	34	Female	Shona	Human Resources
MMF1	39	Female	Shona	Finance
MMF2	27	Male	Shona	Finance
GEHR2	34	Male	Chewa	Human Resources
GEHS2	28	Female	Shona	Housing
GEF2	22	Male	Ndebele	Finance

The code book, which has the field notes, is aimed at refining the codes, which will help identify core themes and categories. This process seeks to establish connections among the categories and reveal an emerging narrative that highlights the relationships between the identified themes, as argued by (Naeem *et al.*, 2023). The third data cycle produced seven enduring categories.

Table 5.6: Data Cycle 3 Code Book

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Comfort with Status Quo	Contentment with the situation in the Gweru Municipality can undermine strategic planning by generating resistance to innovation and change. The employees would not be interested in new ideas that would maximise efficiency and effectiveness in operations if they are content with the situation. Dependence on effective strategies to the extent of undermining strategic planning can mute critical discourse and make it more difficult for the municipality to innovate and respond to the changing needs of the people.	10	35
Fear of the unknown	Gweru Municipality's fear of the unknown promotes a hesitation by employees to adopt new concepts and change, which can derail innovative strategic planning efforts. Fear promotes resistance to suggested changes, which prevents necessary discourse needed to conforming with the demands of the evolving community. The municipality is therefore unable to adopt successful strategies, as emphasis is laid on having continuity of established procedures instead of venturing into practical new methods.	8	18
Fear of Loss of Control	Within the Gweru Municipality, a threat of losing control within the ruling party can be an unconscious saboteur to strategic planning since it is the basis of resistance	10	30

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	to innovation or counter-trend. Employees demoralised by the prevailing political environment are likely to become less collaborative and creative out of fear and therefore have a less responsive and more traditional approach to management. The ability of the municipality to serve individuals is undermined by its control inclination, which may render it less capable of carrying out responsible and responsive initiatives in the future..		
Lack of trust in the leadership	In Gweru Municipality, low leadership confidence will have an impact on strategic planning by generating an attitude of scepticism and resistance among the employees, hence preventing them from initiating breakthrough thinking. When employees are not respected, they will not be willing to give their opinions and distrust will hinder innovation by leading to poor communication and collaboration. And so, the municipality might not be able to align its strategic objectives with the dreams of the community and this will weaken its ability to respond appropriately to problems as they come up.	10	25
Budget Constraints	Financial limitations in the Gweru municipality tightly limit the size and enactment of strategic plans to the point that policymakers are forced to prioritize fundamental services over innovating endeavours that could initiate development and growth. Administrators will avoid	7	19

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	engaging in capital outlays on new technology or concepts in efforts to achieve effectiveness and efficiency maximisation under this limitation on finances, which is likely to support a conservative approach to planning. Long-term stability and strategic plans overall can be derailed if the municipality is unable to accommodate the evolving needs of people.		
Sociological needs	Sociological needs from an organisational perspective refer to the requirements individuals have for social interaction, belonging, and collaboration within a workplace. Meeting these needs fosters a sense of community, enhances teamwork, and ultimately contributes to a more engaged and productive workforce.	10	36

With the assistance of the NVivo computer program, I contrasted interview transcripts carefully in an effort to improve my understanding and to further refine the coding process in the construction of categories. With the assistance of this qualitative analysis program, I systematically analysed and clarified the intricate relationships among different ideas. Besides identifying significant upcoming themes that added value to a more developed reading of the data, it served to unveil relationships that may not be immediately visually apparent. It gave substance to a better comprehension of the issues at hand and to increased clarity. The two interview transcripts are compared below in Figure 5.9.

When asked the following question, research participant GEHR2 gave the following response.
Question: ***What are the leadership challenges in the execution of strategic planning and informal structures ?***

The exchange between the leadership issues in the implementation of the strategic planning and informal structures in the Gweru municipality shows a multifaceted interaction of organisational processes. There are a number of factors that are critical in this relationship, including budget constraints, comfort with the status quo, fear of the unknown and fear of loss of control. All these factors are closely intertwined with the informal structures which operate within the organisation, which eventually influence the success of the strategic planning efforts.

The budget constraints are usually a major obstacle to good strategic planning. In situations where there are limited financial resources, the leaders turn to informal networks to seek support and form alliances and tap into resources outside the official budget. These informal structures may help in speedy decision-making and novel solutions to situations in the budget constraint. Such dependencies can however, result in sidelining of formal processes and this creates a discrepancy in implementation of strategic plans and this can create a difference between formally approved strategic plans and those that may arise through informal channels.

The status quo may serve as a two-edged sword in organisations. On the one hand, those living within the status quo might be resistant to change and may make the organisation feel comfortable working within existing norms and informal networks that allow them to feel secure. Conversely, this comfort may kill innovation and flexibility, which are essential in developing an effective strategic planning. The informal structures can also encourage groupthink, where options to the status quo are not sought nor debated, thus restricting the ability of the organisation to deal with new strategic direction.

The fear of the unknown may paralyse decision-making and create hesitation in both leaders and employees. This fear may cause the need to use informal structures. Unofficial networks can offer a secure platform to discuss doubts, yet their presence will spread panic and change unwillingness. This fear, in turn, slows the work of strategic planning because the stakeholders can tend to go along the same lines and neglect innovative solutions that can be helpful to the organisation.

The fear of loss of control is a common way of driving leaders in hierarchical organisations to ensure strict control of strategic initiatives. This has the potential of destroying the very effective systems of the informal structures, which operate on self-governance and trust among the members. By excessively limiting decision-making

procedures to formal processes, leaders may lose an informal network that may provide useful information and resources to achieve strategic objectives. This may result in a mismatch between the official strategic plan and the realities of day-to-day operations within the organisation.

Conclusively, it is the interaction of the budget constraints, the status quo, and the fear of loss of control that has a direct impact on the informal structures in the Gweru municipality. These factors pose a difficult topography to leadership in the process of implementing strategic planning since they may either enhance or obstruct productive cooperation and innovation. By recognising and managing these issues and using the advantages of informal networks, the strategic planning work of the municipality can improve, resulting in stronger and more flexible organisational results.

When asked the same question as above, research participant GEHS1 gave the following response.

Leadership issues in strategic planning implementation and informal organisation of the Gweru municipality can be explained through the sociological needs of the employees and the overriding problem of trust in leadership.

Sociologically, people have the inherent need to belong, be respected and be known in their workplace. These requirements tend to be translated into establishing and sustaining informal structures or social networks, which can be regarded as a complement to formal organisational hierarchies. The informal network arises out of interaction between workers who share similar interests or goals or frustrations and in most cases seem to bridge the loopholes that exist in official channels of communication. In this manner, these structures may have an enormous impact on organisational processes and employee participation.

The legitimacy and position of formal leaders may be compromised when the whole lot lacks trust in the leadership. Such mistrust may be brought about by a range of factors, including a feeling of ineffectiveness, lack of transparency, or poor communication by the leaders. When employees are alienated or mistrustful, they will tend to resort to informal structures to provide guidance and support. Such dependence on informal networks may result in incomplete communication in the sense that the information that is essential in strategic planning may not move well through formal channels.

The interaction of the sociological needs, trust and informal structure is a major challenge to strategic planning in organisations. An example is that in the event that employees experience the fulfilment of their sociological needs through informal relationships as opposed to formal leaders, employees would neglect the strategic goals of the leaders, leading to a piecemeal execution of strategic initiatives. The informal networks might have personal interests or mutual interests, which are not aligned with the formal strategy, and put the organisational interests second in strategic planning.

In addition, informal networks are capable of supporting and obstructing the processes of strategic planning. On the one hand, they can offer insights and real-time feedback that can be given by the employees, which may be missed by the official leadership. Conversely, in case the informal structures encourage scepticism or avoidance of formal decisions, then they may cause confusion and derailment of the implementation of strategic goals.

Conclusively, a detailed insight into how leadership issues, sociological needs, the absence of trust, and informal structures are related is vital to successful strategic planning. Organisations such as the Gweru municipality need to identify and deal with these factors in order to create a harmonious atmosphere where the formal and informal structures can work in harmony to reach the strategic goals. Development of trust in leadership and meeting the sociological needs of employees may contribute to harmonising informal networks and the general strategic plan, which positively influences the overall effectiveness of the initiatives of an organisation.

When asked the same question as above, research participant SMHR4 gave the following response.

When examining the role and influence of leadership style and social context in strategic planning in the Gweru municipality, it is important to take into consideration a number of interconnected variables: bureaucracies, strategic alignment, ethnic origin, social perception, and regulatory compliance. All these factors contribute differently to the development of the strategy used by the municipality in strategic management.

The bureaucracy usually offers the pattern of decision-making and functioning procedures in government agencies such as municipalities. Formality and order in a

bureaucratic system prevail and this aspect may result in inflexibility and slowness to change. This system could be a de-merit to innovation and would limit the capacity of the municipality to deal with emerging challenges. It is also, however, accountable and transparent, which is essential to the trust of the population. Such an environment can make strategic planning a top-down process and decisions are made by upper management with little input of the lower-level employees or stakeholders. This may reduce the success of the strategic plan in case it fails to take into account the experiences and interests of the individuals who are directly affected by such decisions.

It is important that strategic initiatives are aligned with the vision, mission and goals of the municipality. Good leadership should make sure that all the levels within the organisation are aware of and accept this alignment. This involves the incorporation of informal structures, including networks and coalitions created amongst the employees, that may affect the strategic results. Lack of strategic alignment can make projects lose direction towards the overall goals, resulting in the wastage of resources and opportunities.

Ethnic Origin: The social life of Gweru is affected by ethnic origins, which is an important factor influencing the interactions and perceptions at the workplace. The diverse teamwork can contribute to creativity and innovation, but if managed poorly, ethnic differences can cause a lack of understanding and confrontation. The leadership should be able to manoeuvre such dynamics to ensure inclusivity and ensure that the advantages of such diversity are realised. This needs an understanding of cultural backgrounds and the importance of ethnic origin in terms of communication and cooperation in strategic endeavours.

Social Perception: Strategic planning is greatly influenced by the way the municipality is perceived by the employees, stakeholders and the general population. The positive social perception may be useful in increasing cooperation and supporting initiatives, and the negative perceptions can result in resistance and scepticism. The leaders must be able to build a relationship with communities and make sure that their strategies appeal to the interests of the people. The involvement of the public and open-minded communication play a crucial role in creating positive social values that can aid in achieving strategic objectives.

Legal Adherence: All municipalities are governed by strict regulations, and adherence to laws and regulations is the most important aspect in strategic planning. Compliance with regulations helps to make sure that such strategic initiatives are in line with the governmental requirements and expectations of the community, minimising the risk of lawsuits and improving the organisational reputation. Strategic leaders should also be keen on overseeing compliance matters and incorporating regulatory factors in the strategic planning process because neglecting to do this may impede progress and cause expensive consequences.

To sum up, the interaction between the two factors has a great influence on strategic planning in the Gweru municipality. Good leadership has to sail through bureaucratic limits and promote strategic alignment, recognise ethnic diversity, handle social perceptions, and be regulatory compliant. The municipality can improve its strategic management model by acknowledging the impact of informal structures and embedding different views, which result in the successful outcomes that the municipality intended.

Figure 5.9 indicates a comparative analysis of two transcripts in data cycle 3.

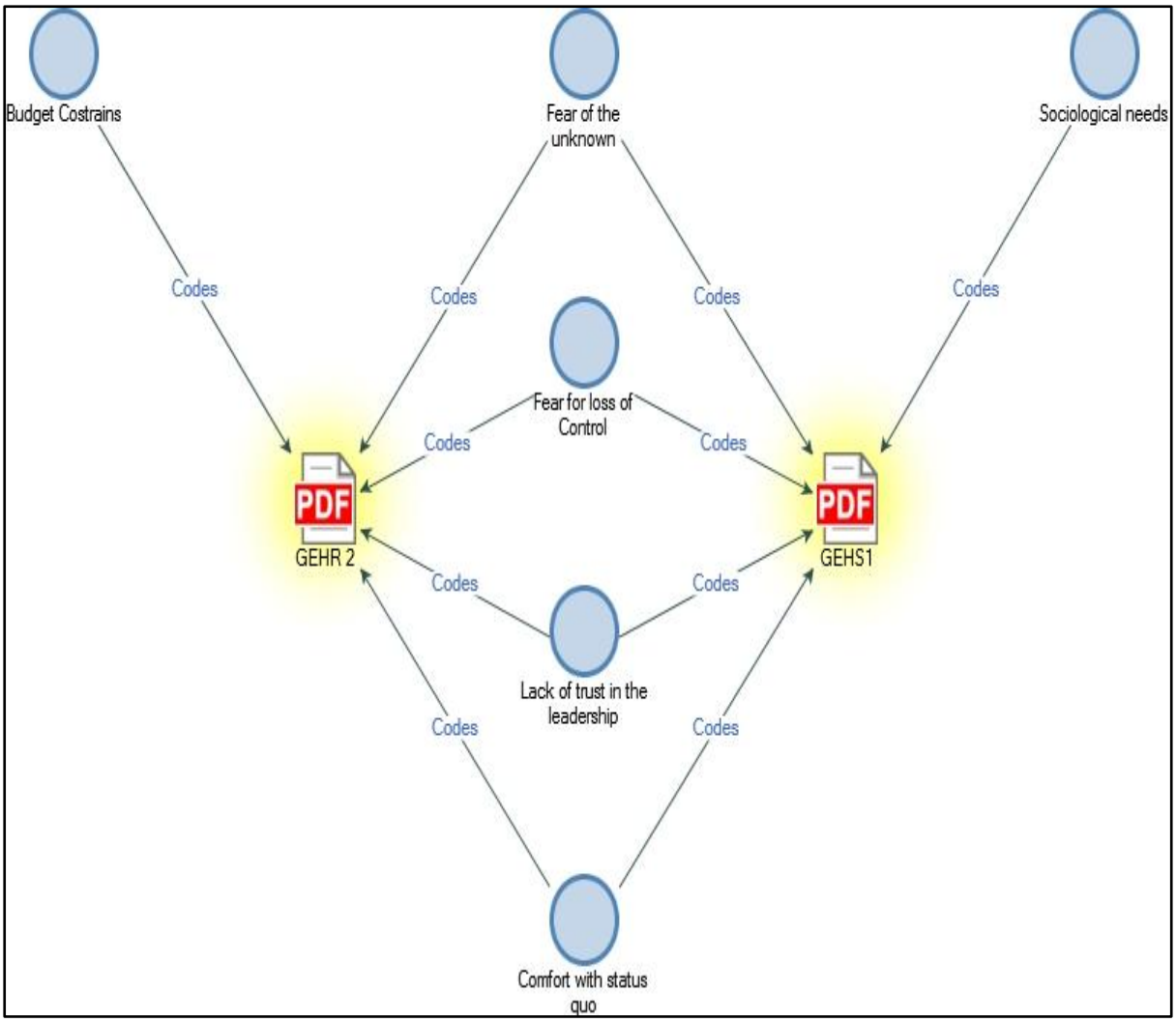

Figure 5.9: Comparison of GEHR2 and GEHS1 Interview Scripts

5.5.1 Summary of Data Cycle 3

Evidence collected indicates that strategic management in Gweru Municipality is primarily driven by fear of the unknown, as postulated by Reio (2020), that fear of the unknown generates resistance to change and innovation. Resistance to new development among employees is typically tailored due to fear of possibilities and unknowns, thus making it difficult for the municipality to adapt to the changing needs of the community. Besides, leaders can also fear delegating power or making ideas for innovation for fear of losing the ruling party's grip and this discourages staff cooperation and creativity. Above all, Wisse et al., (2019) assert that the fear could cause a conservative management style where innovation control is paramount and therefore undermines the role of strategic planning efforts. Furthermore, complacency by employees leads to disengagement of employees as well as resistance to working towards organisational goals. The resistance to change is brought about by the fact that employees potentially develop doubt about the ability as well as the intentions of their

leaders. Given the potential of a docile workforce, it may become hard to create a common vision in an environment where the people do not trust their leaders, and this ultimately leads to fragmentation. Lastly, contentment with the status quo can breed complacency, which may significantly impact the strategic progression of the vision and mission of the organisation.

5.6 Data Cycle 4

In the fourth data cycle, I interviewed seven research participants, the demographic details of whom are indicated in the table below.

Table 5.7: Data Cycle 4 respondents

Code Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Department
SMHR4	35	Male	Shona	Human Resources
SMF4	32	Male	Shona	Finance
GEHS3	32	Male	Ndebele	Housing
GEF3	26	Male	Ndebele	Finance
MMF4	28	Female	Shona	Human Resources
GEF3	24	Female	Shona	Finance
GEHR3	32	Female	Shona	Finance

Table 5.7 provides a thorough summary of the different subsumed codes found in this data cycle. These codes were methodically created after a thorough examination of the interview transcript using NVivo software to help with coding and categorisation. The table highlights the various themes and patterns that surfaced from the data, providing important insights into the underlying motives and perceptions expressed by the interviewees.

Table 11: Data Cycle 4 Codebook

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Stakeholder Alignment	Effective stakeholder alignment with higher stakeholder involvement enables coordination among different groups and enables hands-on management of strategic phased targets and fulfilment of needs in the organisation. It also facilitates systematic engagement among residents and government officials and harmonises interests among different departments, leading to transparency, trust, and participatory decision-making processes. The above-integrated measure will not only reduce ethnic tension but also establish a shared vision of sustainable development and social service delivery for the community.	7	75
Regulatory Compliance	Regulatory compliance involves organisations ensuring that they meet the regulations, legislation, guidelines, and standards applicable to their business. This helps reduce the legal risks while promoting ethical behaviour to build client and stakeholder trust. Businesses can prevent fines and improve their reputation in the market by being compliant with the regulations.	7	18
Organisational Politics	Organisational politics refers to the use of power and influence in an organisation for individual or professional interests, usually by bargaining, networking, and negotiating. Organisational politics might	7	28

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	drive decision-making, resource allocation, and work culture, with a bias towards conflict or cryptic operating rules.		
Social Attribution	Social attribution within an organisational context refers to the process by which individuals interpret and understand the behaviours and intentions of their colleagues and leaders. It shapes how employees perceive workplace dynamics, influences interpersonal relationships, and affects overall collaboration and communication within the organisation.	7	22
Social Judgement	Social judgment in an organisational context refers to the ability of individuals to assess and interpret their colleagues' behaviours, intentions, and emotions. It plays a crucial role in decision-making, collaboration, and conflict resolution, influencing how well team members understand and interact with one another.	7	82
Social Perception	Social perception in an organisational context refers to how individuals interpret and understand their colleagues' and leaders' behaviours, intentions, and emotions. It is crucial in shaping interpersonal relationships, influencing team dynamics, and affecting organisational culture and performance.	7	45
Sociological needs	From an organisational perspective, sociological needs refer to the requirements individuals have for social	7	56

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	interaction, belonging, and collaboration within a workplace. Meeting these needs fosters community, enhances teamwork, and contributes to a more engaged and productive workforce.		

This study analysed two randomly selected interview transcripts from the dataset. The goal was to find the relationships between new themes and the main plot. This analysis helped to clarify the connections between the themes that were found, which led to a better comprehension of the study's conclusions.

GEF3 was tasked with discussing the role and impact of the leadership style and social context in strategic planning, focusing on the role of informal structures and their manifestation within the organisation's broader strategic management framework. The response is indicated below.

> *The disconnection of the organisation may be a problem in seamless strategic planning. Without connections between the departments, individual departments might be running on the same path ; they might end up wasting some resources and having conflicting objectives. Bad communication and absence of integrated strategic frameworks may lead to fragmentation and it may be difficult to apply a unified strategy. Such disconnection may eventually result in conflicting priorities and a lack of overall effectiveness of organisational efforts.*
>
> *Organisational politics is usually significant in determining the result of strategic planning. In cases where politics outweigh the communal interests, the decisions taken may be biased and self-interested as opposed to considering the interests of the municipality. These dynamics may cause interdepartmental or inter-team conflicts, dealing a setback to cross-functional work and may even set strategic initiatives off track. It is important to resolve these political matters and develop a culture of openness and collaboration in order to create strategic alignment.*
>
> *Social attribution is a phenomenon that defines how people decipher and perceive the actions and motives of others and themselves within the organisational setting. The*

misattributions might lead to misconceptions, which can cause loss of trust and cooperation between employees. As an example, when there are dominant stories that certain departments or teams are ineffective, it may impose obstacles to teamwork and prevent the process of strategic planning. The positive attributional style will aid in the creation of a more unified environment that is favourable to effective strategic planning.

All the factors above are affecting the effectiveness of the strategic planning in the Gweru municipal. Absence of clarity and engagement may be caused by poor communication; stifling creativity in centralised decision making; ignorance of the social context may lead to strategies that are not in touch with the needs of the community; fragmentation may cause inefficiencies; politicking may lead to prioritisation; and misattributions may impede trust and teamwork. In order to improve strategic planning, the leadership must take charge of these issues, establish a culture of open communication, decentralise decision-making where feasible, and establish relationships among teams in the organisation. Such a comprehensive view can bring into existence stronger and more involved strategic planning processes that are receptive to external and internal problems.

Figure 5.10 compares two transcripts under data cycle 4.

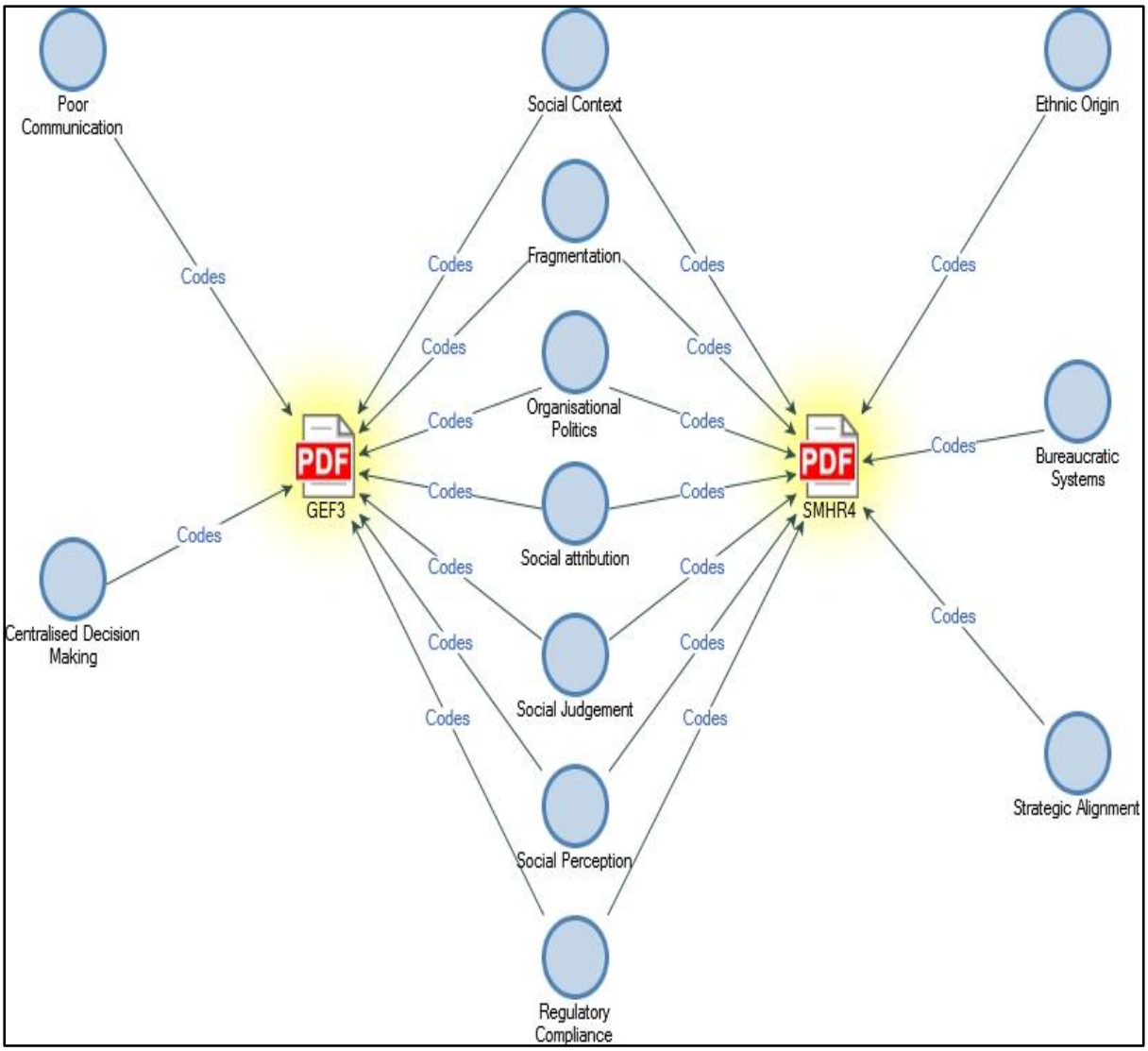

Figure 5.10: Comparison of GEF3 and SMHR4 Interview Scripts

Below is a thorough synopsis of the main conclusions drawn from this dataset.

5.5.1 Summary of Data Cycle 4

Gweru Municipality's strategic management is based on concordance among stakeholders through set regulations. In line with the above, Iyobhebhe, John-igbiele and Olayinka (2024) argue that stakeholders' agreement and compliance with set guidelines and norms shape efficient decision-making and processes within the organisation. Overall performance enhances whenever collaborative activities are enforced. In addition, cooperation and trust are two fundamental aspects of successful performance of municipal responsibilities; however, these two aspects are generally at the epicentre of controversy in the Gweru Municipality. However, most importantly, obedience to regulatory guidelines ensures that the

municipality complies with legislation, thereby ensuring the successful operation of the city and minimising the likelihood of legal ramifications. Of greater significance, infringements of mutually acceptable rules can be penalised financially as well as diminish the credibility of the municipality and thus undermine public confidence in the governance process.

Adherence to rules and enhancing stakeholder participation is simpler as mooted by Chigwata et al., (2019), whereupon local government functions are then disabled by excessive political interference by the central government. Lastly, in order to achieve the optimal concordance between the key stakeholders and the government places the municipal authorities in a hard operational situation.

5.6 Data Cycle 5

In the fifth data cycle, I interviewed 4 research participants, the demographic details of whom are indicated in the table below.

Table 5.8: Data Cycle 5 respondents

Code Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Department
SMHR5	35	Male	Shona	Human Resources
GEF4	32	Male	Shona	Finance
MMF4	32	Male	Shona	Finance
GEHR4	26	Male	Ndebele	Human Resources

The codes and field notes that surfaced during data cycle five are presented in detail in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9: Data Cycle 5 Codebook

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Complex Bureaucratic Systems	The organisational design and administrative arrangement of public services in the Gweru municipality operate through organisational hierarchies and processes known as complex bureaucratic systems. The system is then marked by hierarchical levels and numerous regulations, yet it needs inter-departmental cooperation that tends to lead to inefficiency and communication failures. Due to bureaucratic rigidity and complexity, citizens receive delayed services and poor responsiveness to their demands.	7	35
Organisational Politics	Organisational politics refers to the use of power and influence in an organisation for individual or professional interests, usually by bargaining, networking, and negotiating. Organisational politics might drive decision-making, resource allocation, and work culture, with a bias towards conflict or cryptic operating rules.	7	23
Social Attribution	Social attribution within an organisational context refers to the process by which individuals interpret and understand their colleagues' and leaders' behaviours and intentions. It shapes how employees perceive workplace dynamics, influences interpersonal relationships, and affects overall organisational collaboration and communication.	7	20

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Social Judgement	Social judgment in an organisational context refers to the ability of individuals to assess and interpret their colleagues' behaviours, intentions, and emotions. It plays a crucial role in decision-making, collaboration, and conflict resolution, influencing how well team members understand and interact with one another.	7	19
Social Perception	Social perception in an organisational setting is the process by which individuals construe and make sense of the behaviour, intentions, and feelings of their colleagues and managers within the working environment. Social perception is very vital since it determines interpersonal relationships, team functioning, and organisational performance and culture at large.	7	22
Sociological needs	Sociological needs, as seen from the organisational point of view, are the social interaction, belonging, and cooperation needs individuals have in an area of work. Fulfilling these needs creates community, strengthens teams, and ultimately leads to an engaged and productive workforce.	7	23

NVivo is used to analyse two interview transcripts from data cycle five in order to find and abstract deeper and more comprehensive relationships between the themes and concepts that are emerging.

GEF4 was tasked with discussing the role of complex bureaucratic systems and the connection that these have with the role informal structures play in strategic planning. The response is indicated below.

> *Information Silos are also one of the major downsides of complex bureaucratic structures. The departments can be isolated and this can hinder cross-departmental communication and collaboration. This often results in a fragmented strategic planning process where the plans do not reflect the realities and needs of all the stakeholders in the municipality. Moreover, the agility can be affected by these silos as it is difficult to respond to the altered community needs or policy directives in a quick manner, which is crucial to practical strategic planning efforts. Influence on Informal Structures Informal structures are usually a natural consequence of the inflexibility of bureaucratic systems. In a complicated bureaucratic environment, informal organisations offer employees other points of communication and power. The networks enable the staff to spread information and experience more readily than formal methods may permit, which can frequently result in increased collaboration and innovation. The correlation between bureaucracies and informal systems, however, is complicated and disputable at times.*

Below is a brief overview of the abstracted themes and concepts.

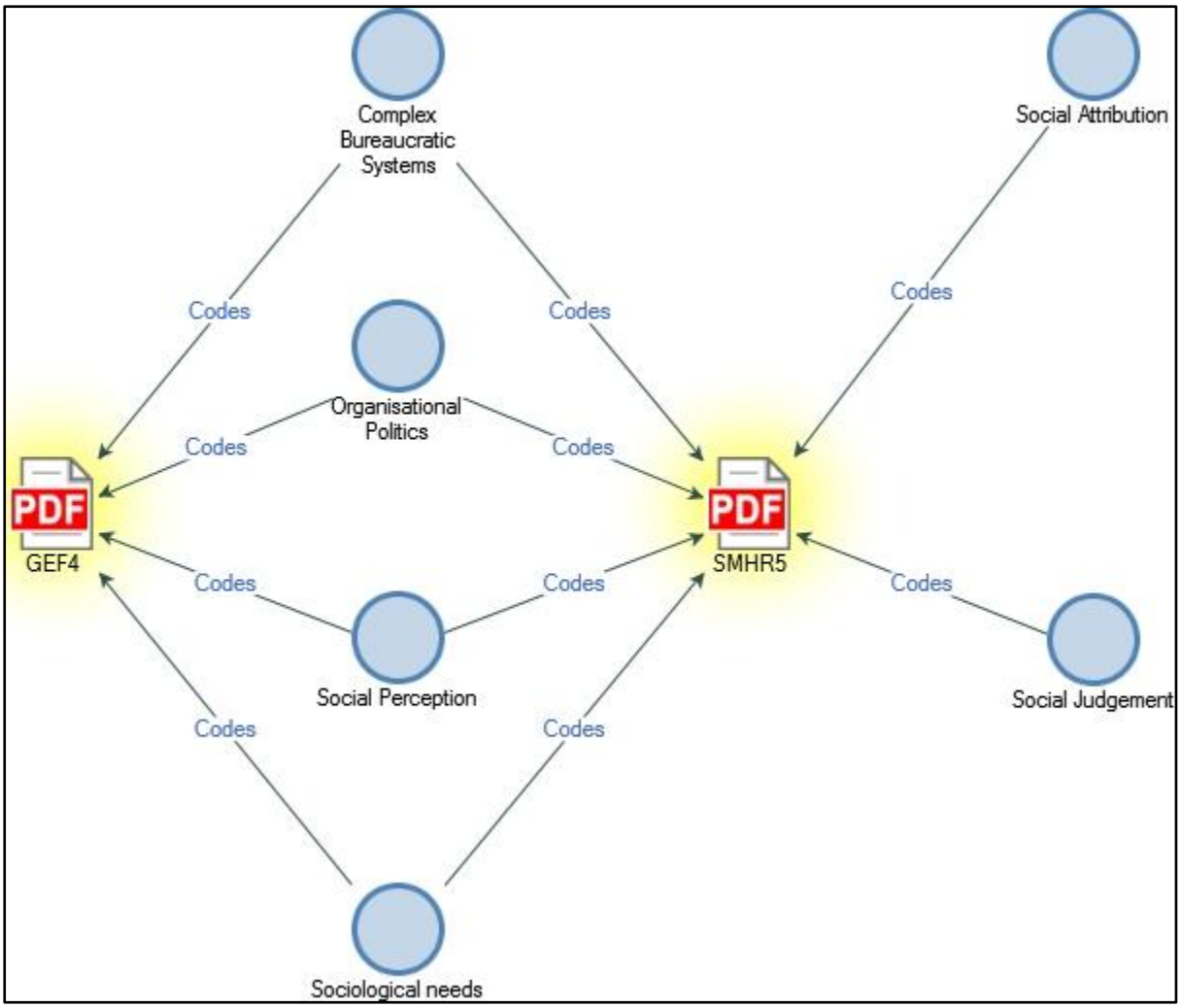

Figure 5.11 : Comparison of GEF4 and SMHR5 Interview Scripts

5.6.1 Summary of Data Cycle 5

The fifth cycle is the analysis, where it became apparent that political relations in the Gweru Municipality are playing a major role in influencing the compound nature of bureaucratic systems in a way that hinders the smooth running of strategic planning. Political influence and bureaucratic systems, identified by Guragain et al. (2024), have long been known to breed power struggles and divergent interests among stakeholders, thereby creating cooperation difficulties. Human beings tend to give priority to political objectives at the expense of organisational objectives in general, giving rise to fragmentation that may cause resistance against efforts for change. The process of decision-making might become a time-consuming bureaucratic process in such a situation, and it would render the capacity of the municipality to respond speedily to people's needs immaterial. Finally, political procedures in these types of complex systems are perhaps capable of dampening creative thinking and the dynamism of strategy-planned initiatives.

MMF5 was tasked with discussing the role of resistance to change, managing complexity and the connection that these have with the role informal structures play in strategic planning. The response is indicated below.

> *Within the setting of Gweru Municipality, resistance to change may be a major challenge towards the execution of strategic planning initiatives. The people in the organisation tend to stick to the norms and practices they are familiar with and this makes it difficult to manage the complexity that is involved in changing to new strategic directions. Social networks and alliances are informal structures that significantly help find a way around this resistance due to offering alternative avenues of communication and influence. These informal processes may either support or hinder the strategy planning process, which represents the organisational politics underlying the decision making process.*
>
> *In addition, it is necessary to ensure that the sociological needs of the employees, including the need to belong and be recognised are met to reduce resistance. Formal and informal structures in the interaction with each other require a subtle grasp of the impact of these components on the strategic outcome. It is crucial to admit that the issue of organisational politics is usually expressed in informal forms of power that influence the possibility of the suggested changes. Therefore, the interrelation between resistance, complexity management and informal structures is crucial to successful strategic planning in Gweru Municipality. Generally, the culture of open communication and inclusiveness will greatly develop the ability of the municipality to adapt and survive in the changing world.*

5.6.2 Data Saturation Point

Data saturation is not only a key aspect of qualitative research, but the main aspect of this research that validates the results and makes them strong. According to Mwita (2022) data saturation is the stage where nothing new or additional information or themes can be identified in the data collection process. This idea is not only to be taken as a procedural formality, but also as a critical milestone which proves the whole research work.

Saunders *et al.*(2018) argue that concurrent data collection and analysis allow a researcher to narrow down on the queries in the light of emerging information. This repetitive process is not only beneficial but also necessary in exposing common themes in the participants. It is

also the way towards a deeper comprehension of the phenomena being studied according to the views provided by Ahmed(2025). In the absence of such an iterative lens, there is a danger that the researcher may slip past important insights, which become clearer through a delicate and developing interaction with the data.

Further, when the saturation is reached, the researchers can notice the change of quality of data under collection. According to Rahimi and Khatooni (2024), at this stage, the likelihood of receiving information that only restates the theme of the current ones is very high hence making the necessity of extra participants minimal. This hurts the conventional perception of the data collection process in qualitative research; one does not just start to collect more data blindly; one should determine when the amount of data is sufficient to permit the thorough analysis.

In its turn, a successful study design should employ the means of real-time saturation detection, as well as affirmation, as emphasised by Naeem *et al.* (2024). The ability to identify patterns during the research process at an early stage could save a significant amount of resources and time by making decisions on how to stop data collection. The efficiency is especially important in qualitative research, where the terrain is in many cases complicated and unpredictable.

Also, the qualitative research is iterative, and this fact highlights the fundamental significance of reflexivity. According to Bouncken, Czakon and Schmitt, (2025), researchers need to continually question the manner in which their assumptions might influence the meaning of the data. This is necessary self-awareness and has a direct influence on the credibility and reliability of the findings. As a result, the data saturation increases the accuracy of the results in terms of their reflection of the experiences of the participants as Subedi (2021) argues.

Overall, the concept of qualitative research placed into the context of saturation and iteration processes goes beyond the matter of methodological compliance, being crucial to carry out rigorous and meaning research. Any failure to value and enact these principles will put at risk the richness and complexity of the data, which may result in the production of superficial conclusions. To fully investigate complex issues, it is not only desirable but also essential to comprehend and use these tenets of methodology (Squire *et al.*, 2024)

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5.7 Data Cycle 6

In the sixth data cycle, I interviewed three research participants, the demographic details of whom are indicated in the table below.

Table 5.10: Data Cycle 6 respondents

Code Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Department
GEF5	32	Male	Shona	Finance
MMF5	32	Male	Shona	Housing
GEHR5	26	Male	Ndebele	Finance

Emerging codes and field notes are presented in the table below.

Table 5.11: Data Cycle 6 Code Book

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Resistance to Change	Change resistance in the Gweru Municipality is actualised when employees and stakeholders resist taking up new policies, procedures and structures initiated by the management. Employees and stakeholders resist because they are afraid that it may not succeed, subsequently leading to unemployment. The impact of such resistance slows down organisational development and slows down the process of effecting necessary municipal reforms.	7	127
Regulatory Compliance	Regulatory compliance means that organisations follow the laws, regulations, guidelines, and specifications that apply to their business activities. This is important for reducing legal risks and promoting ethical practices, which in turn fosters trust with clients and stakeholders. When	8	18

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	companies stay compliant with regulations, they can avoid fines and improve their reputation in the market.		
Managing Complexity	The governance of Gweru Municipality calls for the coordination of different stakeholder engagements, such as government officials, people and citizens' groups, to promote efficient cooperation and decision-making systems. Effective community management is founded upon a proper grasp of the determinants of the community, both economically, socially, and culturally, to formulate inclusionary strategies that focus on solving local problems. The process demands that municipal authorities integrate compliance with laws with expectations of the people in order to establish a kind of governance that is transparent and reliable.	10	30
Social Attribution	Social attribution within an organisational context refers to the process by which individuals interpret and understand their colleagues' and leaders' behaviours and intentions. It shapes how employees perceive workplace dynamics, influences interpersonal relationships, and affects overall organisational collaboration and communication.	10	25
Social Judgement	Social judgment in an organisational context refers to the ability of individuals to assess and interpret the behaviours, intentions, and emotions of their	7	19

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
	colleagues. It plays a crucial role in decision-making, collaboration, and conflict resolution, influencing how well team members understand and interact with one another.		
Social Perception	Social perception in an organisational context refers to the process through which individuals interpret and understand the behaviours, intentions, and emotions of their colleagues and leaders within the workplace. It plays a crucial role in shaping interpersonal relationships, influencing team dynamics, and affecting overall organisational culture and performance.	9	25
Resource allocation	Strategic planning and resource allocation within the Gweru Municipality rely on one another as efficient planning dictates the priorities and objectives that serve as the guide to the allocation of resources to departments and projects. Through linking resource allocation to strategic aims, the municipality invests in projects that will yield the highest return in solving community needs and development. This connection enhances efficiency, transparency, and accountability, ultimately augmenting the ability of the municipality to respond to citizen demands and improve service delivery.	10	36

5.7.1 Chapter Summary

Data cycle 6 revealed that resistance to change is a significant influence on the strategic planning of Gweru Municipality. More importantly, this resistance tends to affect creativity and flexibility. Low organisational motivation and commitment are usually the ultimate outcomes that follow from the resistance of employees to change. Uncertainty may be the origin of such resistance, hence hindering the municipality from properly reacting to evolving community requirements. Besides, risk-avoidant conservative leadership is responsible for creating fear of innovation, thereby inhibiting innovation and growth strategies. Compliance with laws and regulations significantly influences strategic planning processes in Gweru Municipality. Compliance with laws and regulations not only reduces the risk of legal liability but also promotes building a culture of openness and trust among stakeholders. Emphasis on compliance by the municipality improves performance. However, Muronda & van der Waldt (2023) confirm that Zimbabwean public sector law in the local government case grants no autonomy to the latter whatsoever.

CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to an in-depth examination of the data derived from the presentations described in the previous chapter. The previous chapter laid the groundwork by providing a thorough overview of the collected data and performing preliminary analyses on various data sets. This initial analysis was critical for framing the context and identifying emerging themes. While the previous discussion introduced open coding methods and made brief references to relevant literature to highlight their importance, this chapter seeks to delve deeper into the complexities of the collective narrative derived from the diverse data sets.

Drawing from Bingham (2023) the chapter systematically organises and categorises the identified codes, resulting in a coherent and logical framework for addressing strategic management practices in developing countries' public sectors. According to Belotto (2018) analysis and synthesises of data develop insights to identify patterns, relationships, and implications that assist the research to have a broader appreciation of emerging concepts. This comprehensive examination not only improves our understanding of these countries' unique challenges but also makes actionable recommendations for improving governance and management strategies. This chapter aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion about effective public sector management by integrating theoretical perspectives and empirical findings.

6.2 Thematic analysis

Drawing from Maguire and Delahunt (2017), the research applied thematic analysis to formulate and explore patterns or themes of data to inform the research on intricate issues and emerging narratives from the data. The research took into account parent and descendant codes as argued by Brailas, Tragou and Papachristopoulos (2023); descendant codes are narrower sub-themes or less overt parts of those broad concepts. Parent codes are general concepts that encompass generic themes of the study. Parent and child codes work with each other in such a way that they permit general familiarity with data creation and information hierarchy, facilitating the discovery of implicit relationships. Furthermore, as noted by Rosairo (2023), the intersection of different parent codes has the potential to reveal connections between themes that may provide avenues for how theories can be explained. The research developed theoretical concepts that captured the nuance of issues at hand and introduced new theoretical insights through the analysis of concept maps. Kwok, Glista and Moodie

(2021), assert that conceptual maps can be used in qualitative research since they help in the visual representation of data and the highlighting of interdependency between concepts.

The research was able to work with a hierarchy that respects the subtlety of the data and yet can bring out general themes in terms of differentiation between parent codes and child codes. Through this clustering, in-depth familiarity with the research subject was obtained and the connection between themes was developed. Moreover, Majka (2024) argues that pattern recognition abilities of researchers facilitate the construction of new theories. Concept maps are indeed very well adapted to the realisation of rich qualitative data understanding and stimulating theoretical debate. The study presents a conceptual framework for parent code abstraction and child code abstraction, providing a grounded theory foundation for the construction of new theories. The six data cycles are illustrated in Figure 6.1 below.

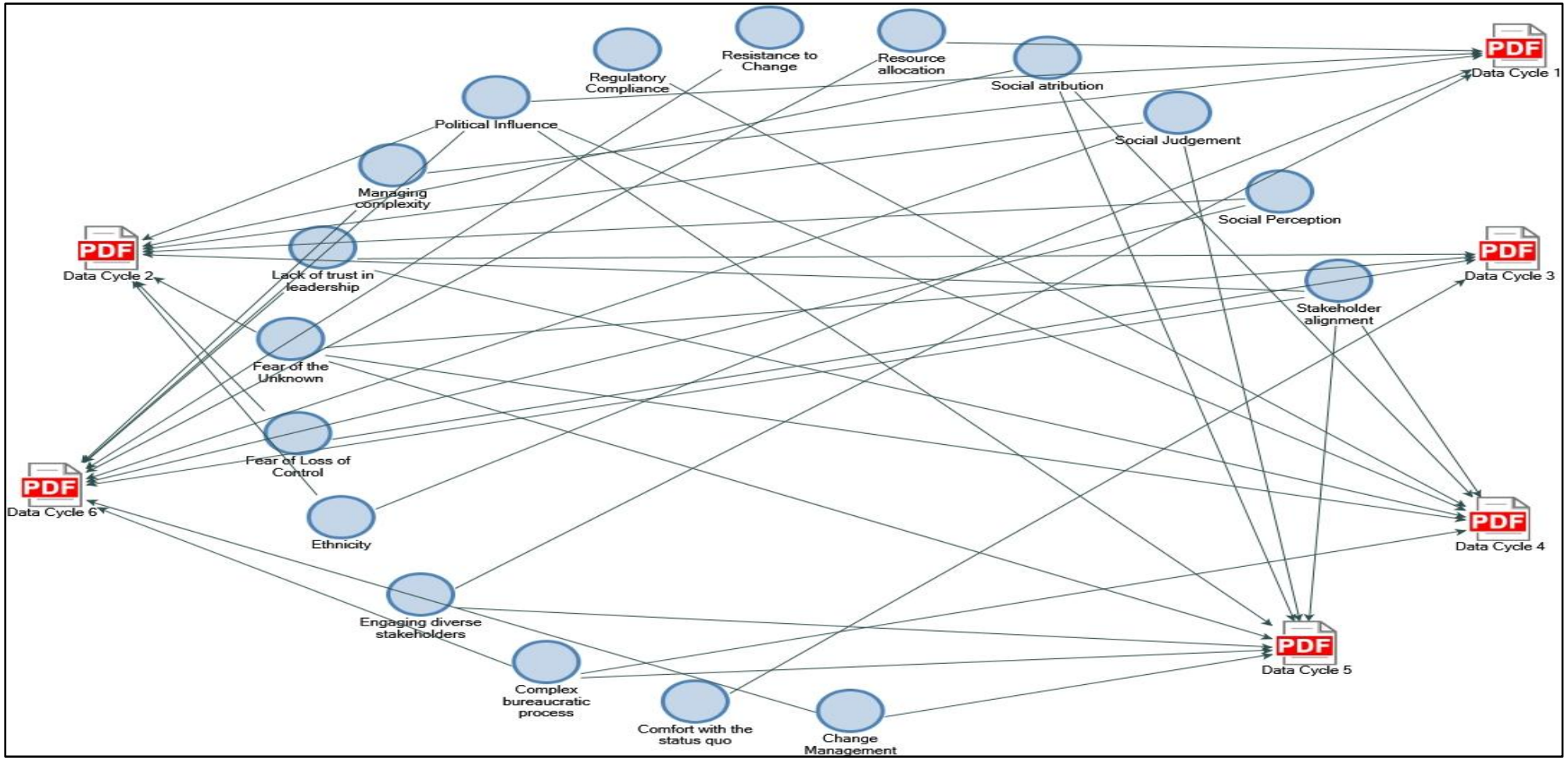

Figure 6.1: Conceptual Ecology of Six Data Sets

The research found four principal parent codes to identify the use of strategic management in informal systems in Gweru City, Zimbabwe. The parent codes are the determinants that guide the study and research on how the informal systems impact the practice of strategic management. The four parent codes are given below.

1. Political influence
2. Change Management
3. Engaging diverse stakeholders
4. Psychological antecedents

The analysis focuses on the four parent codes and their relationships with the descendant codes to better understand how informal structures impact the application of strategic management in the Gweru municipality. Its purpose is to shed light on the potential existential effects of these unofficial structures on the municipality's larger strategic management procedures. The parent codes are systematically discussed in the sections below.

6.2.1 Political influence and informal structures in the application of strategic management.

The governance of the Gweru municipality significantly exhibits the impact of informal organisational structures on various social levels within the organisation. Meyerowitz and Svensson (2019) explain that informal processes in the Gweru municipality are prevalent as they circumvent formal processes, induce irregularity in governance, and lead to the misallocation of resources. The distribution is uneven and affects both the performance of the project and the functioning of the municipality. Additionally, Makena, Mudeje Buya and Kibui (2023) also discovered that informal networks hinder the alignment of stakeholders. This misalignment leads to conflict that affects strategic goals. The informal structures confound strategic control and create decision-making problems. Lack of certainty in the official decision also led to mistrust between employees and management. Misuse of official authority created a fragmented power base within the organisation, as illustrated by Lasarevi-Moravevia and Mosurovi' Rusi i (2323), who argue that most employees within organisations take orders from multiple sources. The processes of the government are made more complex by the limited channels of communication, which limit the workers from working efficiently.

Kadakure and Twum-Darko (2024) assert that non-formal systems have led to the creation of organisational silos, which hinder department communication and collaboration which affect strategic planning. Further, an interaction between such factors might prevent the application

of strategic planning and impede Gweru municipality's development objectives. More importantly, Improved strategic thinking and building a more interconnected culture in contemporary strategic management. Figure 17 is a presentation that shows parent codes and descendant codes derived from the study.

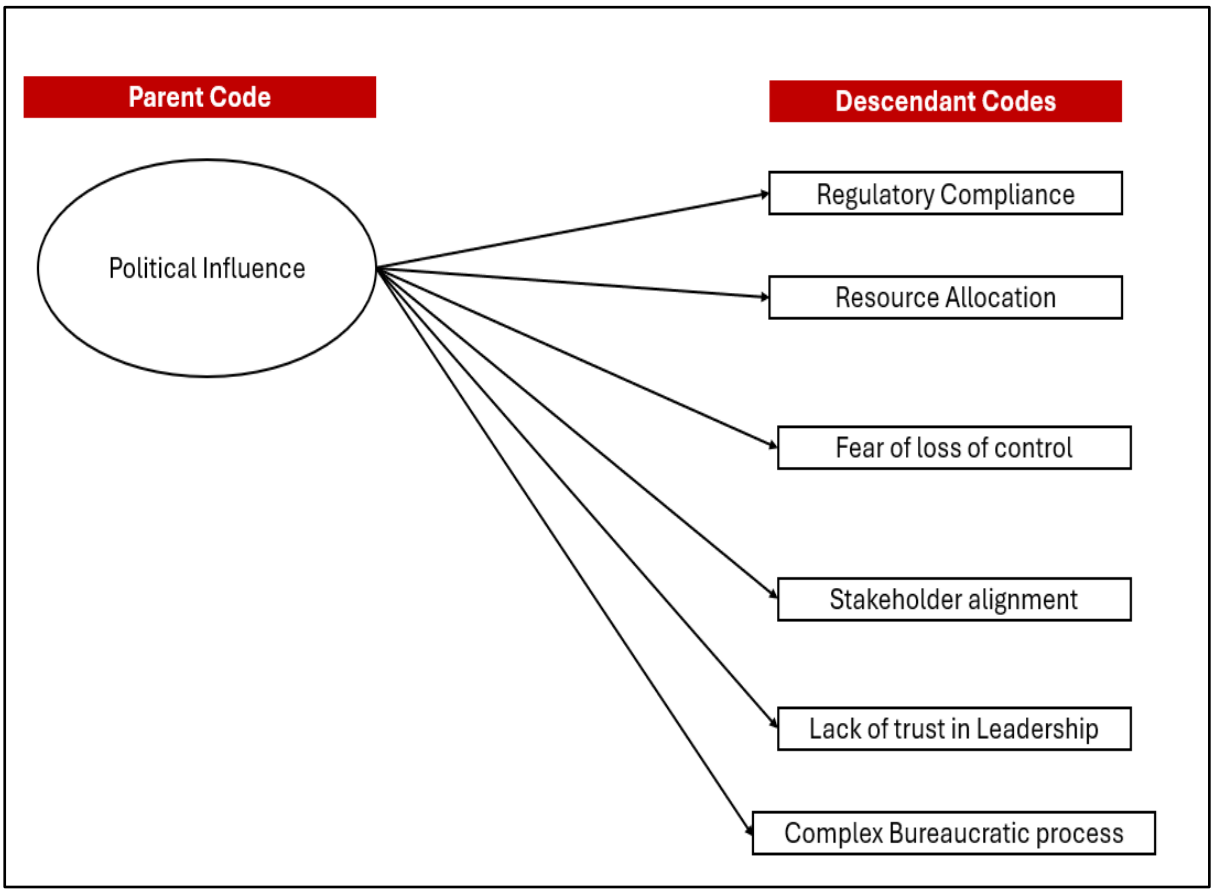

Figure 6.2 : Political Influence Conceptual Ecology

Regarding fear of loss of control, the study observed several critical implications of this notion to informal structures and the implementation of strategic management in the Gweru municipality. Below, the study provides an excerpt from the field notes.

> *"Fear of losing authority in the government party is a risk to strategic planning at Gweru Municipality in the sense that it can make the leaders reluctant to embrace new ideas or share decision-making power. The employees who would be restricted by the political weather conditions will become less cooperative and less innovative due to such fear, making the management more hardline and conservative.". The capacity of the municipality to respond to community needs might be undermined by the emphasis on control, possibly resulting in influence on the implementation of responsive and effective strategies."*

The said observation is in agreement with LeBas and Munemo's (2019) claim because it reflects the extent of polarisation of Zimbabwean public sector workers, which is supplemented by instrumentalised conflict developed by elites who rule the nation. The polarisation results in fragmentation of unofficial groups according to social orientation, ethnicity, and political ideology and is a feature of most government activities.

When asked the following question, research participant SMF1 gave the following response.
Question: ***What are the key social challenges that impact the effectiveness of strategic management initiatives?***

> *"Many social factors in Gweru municipality are vital in strategic management because they affect community involvement and participation in local projects. The city's diverse demographics, including varying cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses, require tailored strategies that address the unique needs of each group. Public opinion and sentiment towards governmental policy also play a role in the level of stakeholder investment, so local leadership must work to build trust and operate with transparency. Local social networks and community organisations also provide essential pipelines for the distribution of information and the collection of feedback, making strategic planning much more effective. Lastly, citizens' education and awareness levels can determine their participation and cooperation in strategic management, stressing the need for capacity-building and outreach programs.*
>
> *The most pressing social issues within the Gweru City Council significantly affect the success of strategic management programs. With poor public involvement, these projects will not be as successful because the citizens feel like they are being forced upon them instead of being included in the decision-making process. The socioeconomic disparities divide the community, and it becomes impossible to agree on common goals. Besides that, distrust in leadership can lead to questioning all of the proposed strategies, and people are not likely to buy into anything. Communication and educational programs need to be in place; otherwise, the programs will not go anywhere or do what they are intended to do".*

Based on the given responses and analysed data the concept of political influence can be conceptualised as illustrated in figure 6.3 below.

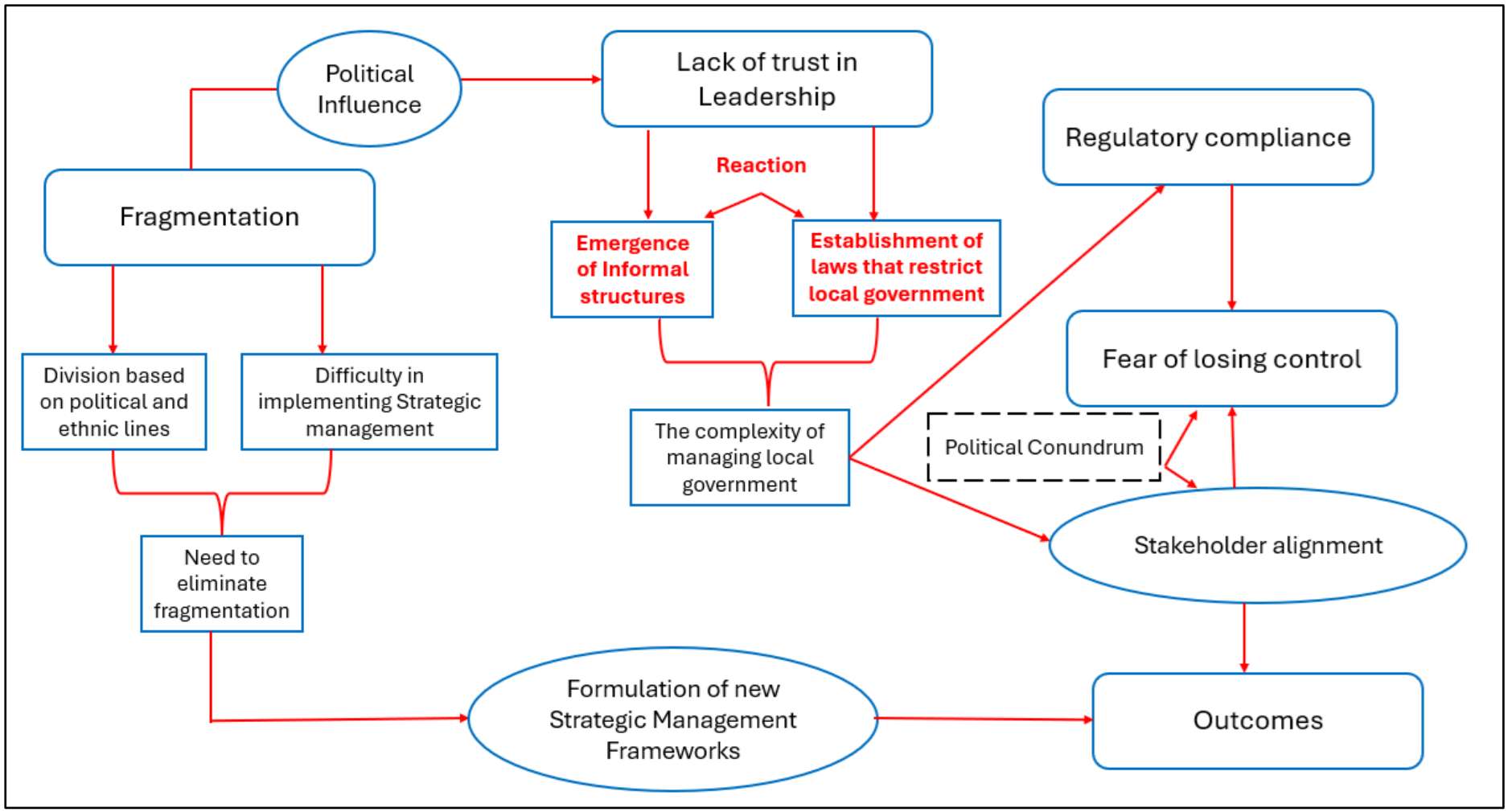

Figure 6.3 : Conceptual narrative of political influence in the Gweru Municipality

The research offers a succinct overview of political influence in light of the rise of informal structures. More significantly, the overview highlights how the informal structure affects the Gweru Municipality's implementation of strategic management.

6.2.2 Overview of the political Influence concept

The aforementioned position concurs with the argument by Marumahoko et al., (2020) that the minister can issue directives under section 315 of the Urban Councils Act or overrule Council decisions under section 314 of the Urban Councils Act. In addition, the minister can appoint the local government council by virtue of section 132 of Amendment 1 of the Urban Councils Act of 2008. The trust that employees had in decision-makers was broken by their persistent effort to negotiate the technicalities of administrative procedures.

The employees felt frustrated and uncertain because of the lack of action from leadership in enforcing compliance with rules. Others believed that the deployment of resources was biased and vague, thus controversial. Stakeholder alignment was affected by the failure of communication, again distancing workers from decisions. Lack of trust is caused by such a breakdown in trust, thus making cooperation hard for the municipality to effectively undertake their strategic plans. Of more significance, Moynihan and Pandey (2008); Nisar and Maroulis (2017); Siciliano (2015); in Whetsell, Kroll and Dehart-davis (2021) agree that the absence of regular communication has resulted in powerful types of informal networks within the public sector.

Staff morale is affected when they are confronted with more issues, which can lead to demotivation and lower productivity. It was established through data analysis that increased discontent was the origin of resistance to significant changes or innovation aimed at enhancing governance. It therefore indicates the degree to which leadership and staff must communicate more candidly and take action to build trust. These issues need to be addressed in order to foster a quality workplace culture that promotes accountability and good management practice. This political influence is very much related to the following concept of change management, which will be discussed in the following section.

6.3 Change management and how informal structures affect the application of strategic management.

The key challenges of change management in Gweru Municipality are closely related to employee and stakeholder resistance. Kumarasinghe and Dilan (2021) believe that change management is the engine that drives organisational success and strategic management in a turbulent and uncertain business environment. Ignorance or fear of the unknown seemed to discourage the application of programmes in strategic management within the municipality of Gweru. The intricate network of informal arrangements to be negotiated within the organisation significantly complicated strategic planning. The assumed position aligns with the readings presented, as in accordance with Nyagadza, Gwiza, and Hove (2022), the Zimbabwean working environment is a microcosm of society and is representative of the social diversity as well as the social dynamics of the broader population.

Open communication and trust are required because the leaders will be walking on thin ice between power relations and calls for reform and cultural beliefs constrain. As observed in the literature review, the historical factor therefore comes under Musanzikwa and Ramchander's (2018) point that such de facto arrangements will necessarily be influenced by norms and traditions of culture, which profoundly influence how people relate, communicate, and make decisions in the workplace. Besides, employees directly involved in strategic planning can become even more entrenched in the event that they perceive it as being too ambiguous or complex. Leadership is required to demystify the benefits of strategic planning and simplify matters so that it may be able to manage change. The diagram above shows the child codes and the parent code of change management.

More importantly, Figure 20 is a conceptual Ecology Map, which is a diagrammatic representation of all the different elements being utilised in determining how the process of change is managed in an organisation and enables us to see how factors are associated with the change process.

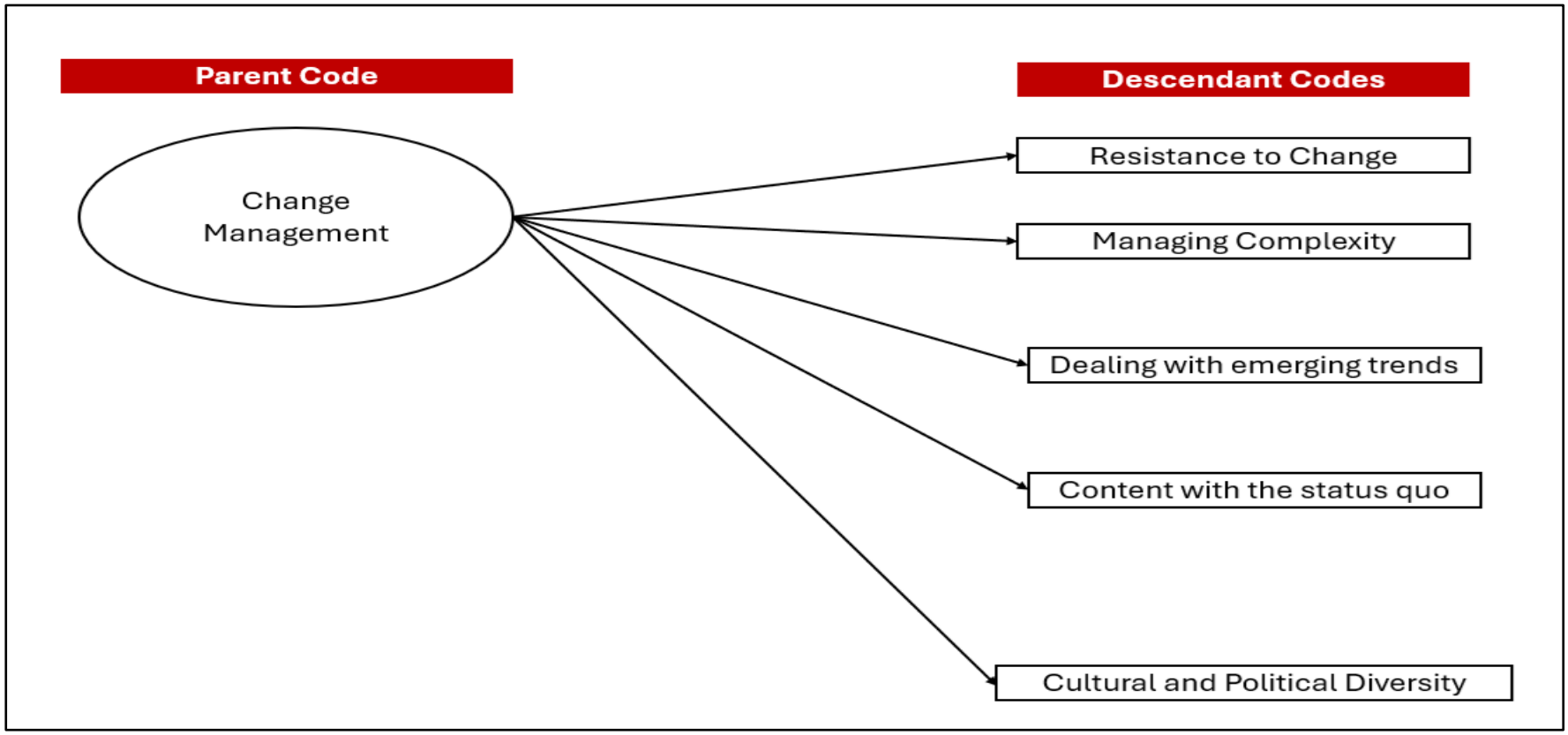

Figure 6.4: Conceptual Narrative of Change Management in the Gweru Municipality

6.3.1 An overview of informal structures and change management

Organisational informal networks would normally be part of change management, especially in cases of resistance. Based on the literature accessed, Informal networks would be capable of contributing positively to the execution of strategic programs, as argued by Makena, Mudeje Buya, and Kibui (2023). Members of such informal networks can resist new projects since they prefer routines and traditions that have been set. The change process may be more challenging due to the resistance, and thus, awareness and adjustment of leaders to problems brought by such arrangements become significant. Based on the previously read literature, Vigatsi and Amuhaya (2019) confirm that diversity, positivity and an inclusive workplace must be developed with informal arrangements. Organisational managers need to value and capitalise on the individual's peculiar strengths and outlook. This way, organisations can capitalise on diversity towards enhancing sustainability, productivity, and development, being either a liability or an asset to organisations in coping with emerging trends. Depending on the capability to cope with suggested changes, the political and cultural diversity of the informal networks is no exception in strategic planning. Based on the literature read, Nyagadza, Gwiza, and Hove (2022) provide that promoting workplace diversity in Zimbabwe also involves setting the culture of inclusion to appreciate and respect differences. Those tolerant of the status quo are likely to oppose change as they perceive that it undermines their well-developed ways of working.

Thus, recognising such differentiated perceptions and extending the hand towards those informal leaders who have influence over the people's mindsets are needed in successful change management. The initial function is attested by the reviewed literature, who maintain that organisations can leverage the influence of informal structures through open communication, inter-departmental bridging, and allowing the employees an opportunity to build meaningful relations regardless of formal position (Koch & Denner 2022). Clarifying the strength of these informal arrangements can bring about more participative decision-making processes that treat the core issues of the workforce. Last but not least, making strategies for the enablement of greater malleability and togetherness in transition relies on awareness of how informal arrangements and change management exist together.

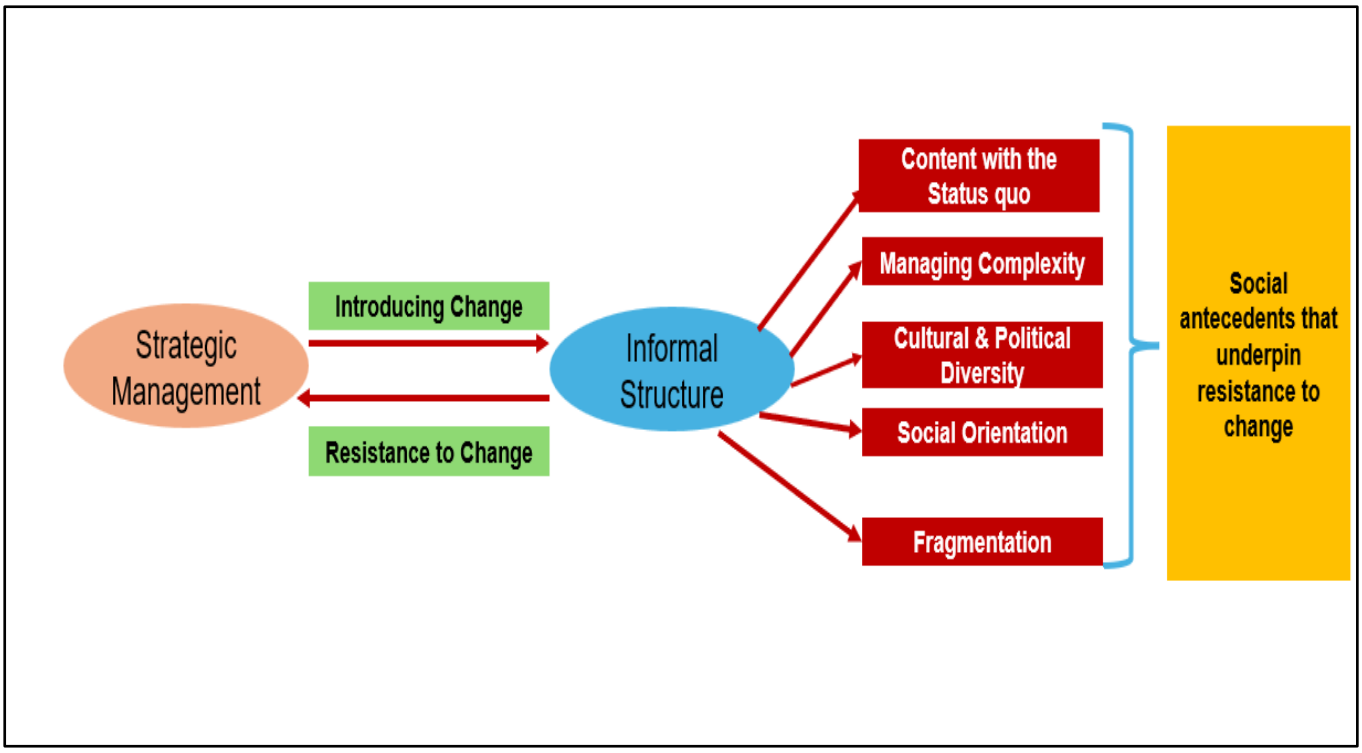

Figure 6.5: Social antecedents that underpin Change Management in the Gweru Municipality

Resistance to change, which is manifest through informal organisation, tends to result from a desire for the status quo, wherein individuals and organisations may be reluctant to give up tried practices in favour of the ambiguity of novelty. The diversity of culture and politics within the community, potentially leading to disjointed social orientations that hinder consensus regarding required change, maintains this resistance. In addition, aligning the intricacy of all these different perspectives might render stakeholders more conservative because they would be worried about how the shift would influence their existing relations and positions in the informal arrangement.

6.4 Stakeholder engagement and strategic management

In the Gweru Municipality, stakeholder interaction is crucial in the effective use of strategic management practices. Competing agendas among stakeholders make such organisational social interaction challenging since various stakeholders pursue their own agendas at the expense of shared objectives. As Sachs and Kujala (2021) assert, integrative stakeholder engagement is increasingly being applied across various fields, including sustainability management and strategic management, as shall be recollected from the literature reviewed herein. Further, the literature reviewed provides evidence in favour of the urgent need for efficient management of numerous stakeholders to ensure a sound platform for strategic management within the organisation.

SMHR3 answered the question below in the manner described below.

> ***Question:*** *Can you provide an overview of the current strategic management practices within your organisation?*
>
> ***Answer:*** *Effective strategic management of the Gweru Municipality is dependent on stakeholder engagement as it enhances collaboration among different actors who play a significant role in decision-making. Effective engagement of government, local communities, NGOs, and private sector players as stakeholders can provide the municipality with information that will be indicative of far-reaching perceptions and interests of the citizens. Apart from affirming stakeholders' ownership of development action perception, this participatory approach guarantees that strategic plans are in good alignment to account for regional socioeconomic and cultural differences. Stakeholders also contribute inputs towards the identification and prioritisation of the needs of people, such that topics like environmental sustainability, infrastructural development and provision of health and education will be taken into consideration. Encouraging positive stakeholder relationships through collaboration and communication will create trust and transparency, which are two essential elements. To encourage public support and engagement with governance structures, such trust is most significant. Involving stakeholders can also provide a venue for consistent conversation, enabling constant contribution and progressive adaptation of the planning strategy. In addition to building the municipality's image with its residents, responsiveness also enhances the community's resilience so that it will be more capable of coping with adversity and altered conditions. Finally, successful stakeholder engagement ensures long-term municipality development and well-being through better governance as well as sustainable and equitable results to the municipality.*

As the reviewed literature reminds us, according to Xegwana, Herron and Nyika (2024), this imbalance can make it difficult to find something to relate to and can lead to tensions. Besides, the stakeholders cannot adequately understand the strategic objectives involved because barriers to communication inhibit understanding and transparency. These interactions are further exacerbated by the structures of power in the municipality, under which those exercising power can overwhelm the discourse, silencing weaker players and distorting the decision-making process. Political and socioeconomic upheavals, which come abruptly, can exacerbate such problems in an accelerating environment, requiring flexibility from all concerned. Stakeholders are required to move within a terrain whose power can be different, therefore necessitating a change of the strategy for engagement depending on the existing conditions. To the same question, MMHR1 responded as shown below

“Stakeholder plans in Gweru Municipality are central to the resolution of conflicts among vying interests. Strategic plans create avenues of cooperation by eliminating conflict, confusion and bickering through open lines of communication. This enables all voices, including dissenting voices, to be heard and considered. Once all the voices are heard, it will be easy to manage power relations and fragmentation within the organisation. Tension is distilled through the establishment of an open playing field, which will incorporate the excluded stakeholders to articulate their interests. In addressing threats and opportunities as they emerge, the strategies need to be adaptive to respond to the dynamic operating environment of the municipality. Last but not least, good interaction promotes a culture of cooperation and builds confidence so that the municipality is able to make more sustainable and inclusive choices.”

As seen from the reviewed literature, to enhance stakeholders' engagement and encourage a respectful and empathetic conversation, competing interests such as these need to be identified and addressed (Knox, Marin-Cadavid and Oziri, 2024). The achievement of a more cohesive approach to strategic management is attainable by filling existing gaps through the building of trust through regular and open communication. Successful engagement with stakeholders is ultimately key to the long-term development of Gweru Municipality as it enables it to be more resilient and responsive to a rapidly changing world. Figure 6.6 satisfactorily portrays the intervening factors that shape stakeholder engagement in the Gweru Municipality.

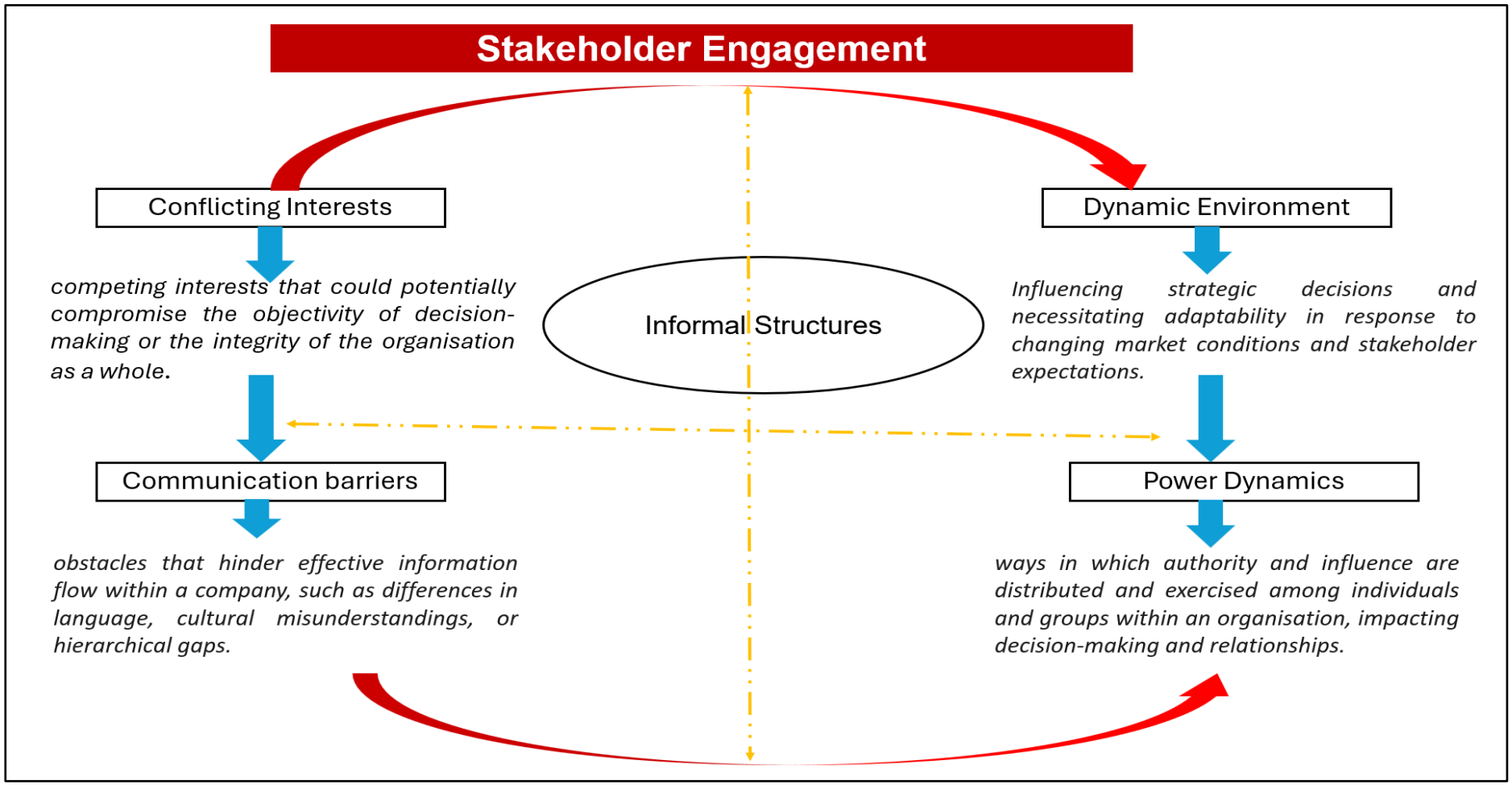

Figure 6.6: Stakeholder Engagement ecological map in the Gweru Municipality

6.5 Psychological antecedents and how informal structures affect the application of strategic management.

Use of strategic management in Gweru municipality is mainly driven by a range of psychological drivers, the most important one being social attribution. This critical factor that citizens and stakeholders end up attributing success or failure to certain leaders ultimately determines their support or resistance to those given leaders, as argued by Malle (2022), who is an expert in inferential interpretation of behaviour. Additionally, the issue is whether social judgment is relevant since the members of society judge proposed policies based on prejudice and assumptions regarding existing institutions of governance, as Taylor (2017) explains in his research regarding an elementary heuristic device like the rule of thumb.

This choice may colour cooperation, particularly if the stakeholders view the efforts of management as risky or counter to their interests. Social perception also influences the reception of strategies; people will not cooperate when they believe that the management is opaque or unaccountable. It is argued that fear of the unknown places another layer of complexity because residents might get afraid of fresh strategic directions and resist change, according to Carleton (2016), who asserts that fear of the unknown is primarily rooted in anxiety. More seriously, these psychological factors can support or undercut stakeholder cooperation and commitment, and are therefore absolutely central that they be managed if strategic management is to be successfully implemented. Figure 23 below illustrates the above psychological precursors to enabling comprehension of strategic management in the Gweru Municipality.

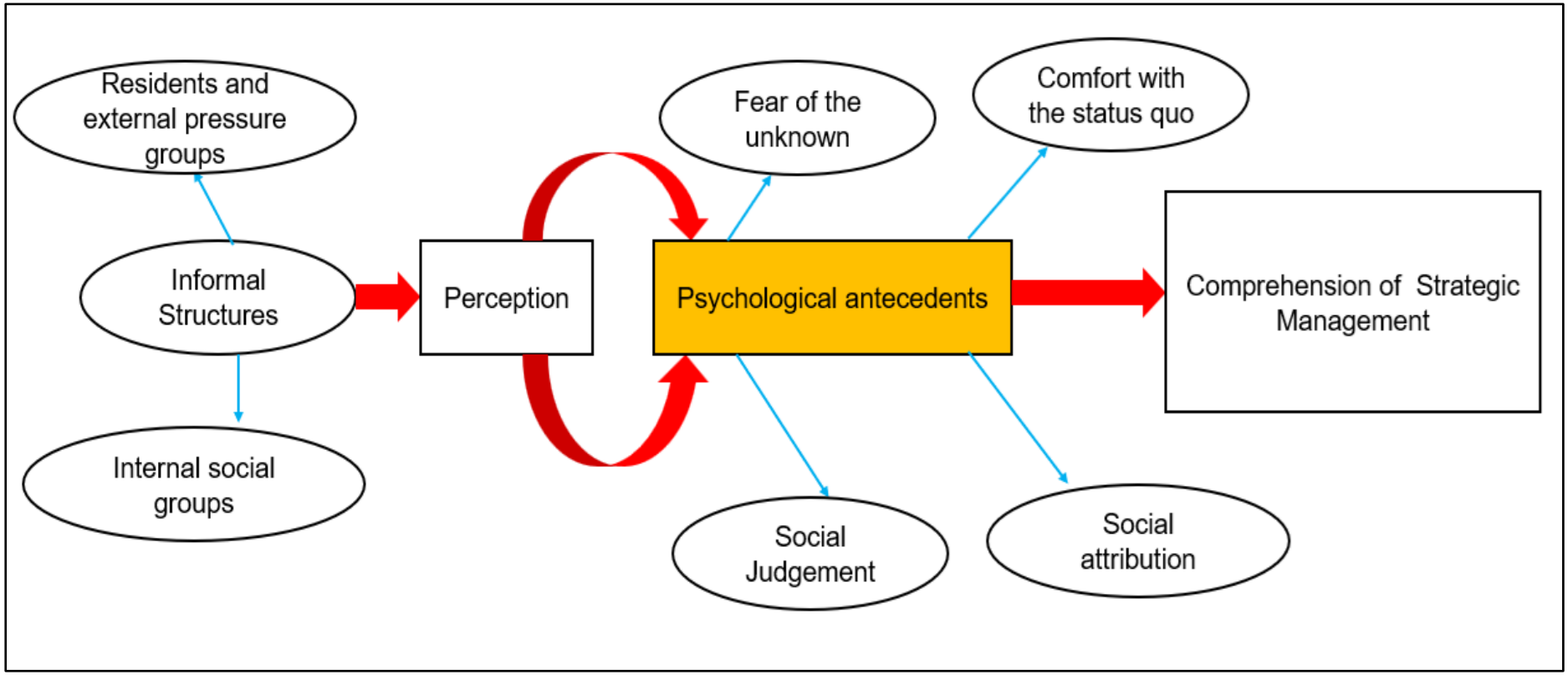

Figure 6. 7 : Psychological antecedents that underpin comprehension of strategic management in the Gweru Municipality

6.6 Main Observations

67% of the total population of Gweru Municipality is Shona based on the aggregate sample size. 24% Ndebele, and the remaining minority groups constitute only 9%. The three de facto groups of the organisation are represented in this division. I witnessed significant regionalism based on ethnicity, which reflected deep-seated tensions within the society. Shockingly, 70% of the senior managers were male and, therefore, women who have strong reservations about this status quo also created their unofficial networks to help change this narrative. I further observed that pressure groups of the environs and the locals both possess dissimilar demands with management; however, most of their demands coincide with the informal internal clusters. Such unspoken bargains have facilitated an effortless union between the external pressure groups and internal social networks. Interestingly, even though the Council's majority opposition party runs Gweru Municipality, there is a part of the ruling party that shows a clear sense of entitlement. The central government's approach also appears to place extra pressure on the minority party to an extent that the minority party has been placed in a position where it even questions its right to govern the Council. The employees fear the interventionist agenda of the politically powerful government owing to such dynamics. Due to the deflection of political power in decision-making from stakeholder participation, and the exclusion of stakeholder participation, primarily due to regional and ethnic considerations, the complexity of such covert networks significantly impacts change management practice in Gweru Municipality. These covert power structures hamper change management practice, generating resistance and communication failure, frustrating effective management practice. The organisation is also plagued with ineffective management of diversity due to the fight for dominance, which subsequently undermines co-operation.

6.7 Summary of Main Findings

This chapter elaborates on data collected in the previous chapter on the complexity of strategic management practices in the public sector of developing countries such as Gweru, Zimbabwe. Drawing from Brailas et al. (2023) and Maguire and Delahunt (2017) process, this chapter starts with a description of a conceptual framework for thematic analysis of data. To allow the study to gain a deeper insight into the concepts that underpin the activities of informal structures activities within the organisation, the study differentiates parent and descendant codes in organising data into overarching themes and specialist sub-themes. In the spirit of improving analysis and theory frameworks support, the chapter used conceptual maps as a visual means of sketching out the inter-relationship between different themes. The construction of the framework is the product of realising how themes are interconnected,

creating new lines of thinking and confirming the argument for successful public sector management.

Overall, four parent codes were found in terms of describing how informal organisational arrangements influence strategic management in the Gweru Municipal government. As can be seen from the data analysis, all parent codes reveal the role that informal practice plays in avoiding regulatory compliance and official procedures. This chapter also builds upon our knowledge of the complex dynamics involved at the nexus of strategic management and informal structures and provides pragmatic recommendations for better management and governance practice in such cases. The following chapter merely touched upon the significance of Chi-Square analysis. The study brought an understanding of the impacts of strategic variables of Gweru Municipality, such as political influence, change management, stakeholder management, and psychological variables. Analysis enabled the study to reveal patterns and underlying facts of informal structures. Using Chi-Square analysis, the research was also able to refute or test new hypotheses regarding the role informal structures play in influencing strategic practice.

CHAPTER 7: HYPOTHESIS TESTING

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, qualitative data analysis was carried out in the Gweru Municipality. During analysis, four pillars of significance that guide the nexus between informal structure and strategic management were determined. Political influence, as the first pillar, was explored in terms of its role in shaping the management's decision to support or suppress strategic initiatives. The second pillar involved addressing the issue of changing management, emphasising the need for flexible strategies. In an attempt to meet the emerging and dynamic needs of social networks within the organisation. The third pillar addressed working collaboratively and communicating towards developing an environment of support for strategic management through the engagement of numerous stakeholders. The fourth column, psychological antecedents, highlights that the cognition of groups and individuals will define how effective strategic attempts are. These columns present a set of parameters where one can interpret the complex dynamics of how strategic management is influenced by informal structures. In the following section, the current chapter used Chi-Square analysis to triangulate this result. This test statistic will inform us further about how different each of these columns is from the other and how they affect the strategic management outcome. Hypothesis testing seeks to increase the validity of qualitative data and give a closer insight into the problems faced by Gweru Municipality.

7.2 Significance of Chi-Square to Hypothesis Testing

As would be remembered from the literature reviewed, Nihan (2020) contends that the use of Chi-Square analysis in conducting hypothesis testing or in using qualitative research enhances the validity of research findings. Again, Singh (2022) contends that Chi-Square provides researchers with a statistical measure of observed and expected frequencies to assist them in identifying significant correlations between variables. Sandelowski (1995;179), as cited by Mocănașu (2020), suggests that the process enhances overall validity within the study through empirical analysis of qualitative findings. Moreover, as one may observe in the literature surveyed, Daniel (2016), employing this quantitative approach, posits that a researcher can observe patterns which would not be easily identified if it were researched qualitatively only, and thus develop a clearer conception of the phenomenon under investigation. Employing various approaches gives the research a wider and more substantial outlook. Employment of Chi-Square testing finally strengthens the validity and rigour in conclusions made and allows us to best understand the intricacies at play. The Chi-Square equation is as follows:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where:

- X^2 is the chi-square test statistic
- Σ is the summation operator (it means “take the sum of”)
- *O* is the observed frequency
- *E* is the expected frequency

7.3 Hypothesis formulation

Hypothesis testing was used in the study to validate the claims derived from data analysis. Drawing from Lawal, Ayi and Apeh (2024), who argue that hypothesis formation makes claims testable, which makes empirical research feasible through precise and subsequent scientific analysis . The four fundamental concepts discussed in the previous chapter, i.e., political influence, change management, engaging various stakeholders, and psychological antecedents, were used as the basis for hypotheses in this research. Moreover, Singh (2020) believes that all the hypotheses aim to explore the way the concepts interact and coexist, and the same premise was used to assess how the informal structures influence the outcome of strategic management in the Municipality of Gweru. The research attempts to better understand the influence of such influential pillars on one another and overall strategic performance through making proper extrapolations from them. The methodology allowed dynamics in action within the municipal setting to be assessed systematically.

7.3.1 Hypothesis Statements

A testable hypothesis, according to Unnikrishnan *et al.*, (2011), should be derived from two extremes, represented by a null hypothesis and an alternative hypothesis. Either of the two hypotheses can be accepted or rejected based on the computation. The research derives the hypothesis statements from the following four concepts established in the previous chapter:

- Political Influence
- Change Management
- Engaging diverse Stakeholders
- Psychological antecedents

The hypothesis test uses a P value of 0.5. If the computed Chi-Square value is higher than the Chi-Square tabular value, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted (Nihan, 2020).

7.3.2 Hypothesis 1: Political Influence

The two hypotheses are presented below

Null Hypothesis (HO): The degree of political influence and the efficiency of strategic management implementation in Gweru Municipality do not significantly correlate.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): The degree of political influence and the success of Gweru Municipality in implementing strategic management are significantly correlated.

The level of significance is 0.5

Table 7.1: Hypothesis 1: Observable values

Political Influence	**Successful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Unsuccessful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Total**
High Political Influence	7	30	37
Low Political Influence	25	10	35
Total	32	40	42

Table 7.2: Hypothesis 1: Expected values

Political Influence	**Successful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Unsuccessful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Total**
High Political Influence	28.2	35.2	63.4

Low Political Influence	27	33.3	60.3
Total	55.2	68.5	123.7

Table 7.3: Calculation of X^2

Observed Values (O)		**Expected Value (E)**	**(O-E)**	**(O-E) ^{2}**	**$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$**
7		28.2	21.2	449.44	15.94
30		35.2	5.2	27.04	0.77
25		27	2	4	0.15
10		33.3	23.3	542.89	16.3
Total					$\sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ $X^2 = 33.16$

Degrees of freedom= (columns-1) (Rows-1)

(2-1) (2-1) = 1x1= 1

Significance level (α) = 0.05

X^2 Tabular = 3.841

X^2 Calculated = 33.16

X^2 Calculated > X^2 Tabular (or called as X^2 Critical)

$\therefore$ We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): *The extent of political power and effectiveness of Gweru Municipality in the implementation of strategic management go hand-in-hand. The data set reflects the significance of political issues, justifying the hypothesis that politics is of critical importance in the implementation of strategic management in the organisation. Furthermore, the literature reviewed and the hypothesis as mentioned above agree with Chigora's (2018) longitudinal research since it displays that Zimbabwe's public sector political culture is a result of the country's intrinsic political culture. A demonstration of a codebook built using NVivo enables visualisation of this data to provide a basis for further investigation. Let it be clear that, based on only five transcripts, the problem of politics was mentioned 120 times, as can be discerned from the text highlighted in the figure below.*

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Internal and External Politics	Internal politics refers to the dynamics and power struggles within an organization or state, while external politics involves the relationships and interactions between different organizations, states, or countries.	5	120
Language Differences	Language differences are about unique structures, vocabularies, and sounds that define different languages. These variations can affect how people communicate and understand each other. Sometimes, they create hurdles in translating and interpreting because the cultural subtleties and contextual meanings don't always match between languages.	5	32
management by objectives	Management by Objectives (MBO) is a strategic approach that seeks to enhance an organization's performance by setting clear goals that both managers and employees agree on. This method encourages a feeling of ownership and responsibility as team members strive to meet specific, measurable objectives within a designated time period.	5	20

. Figure 7.1: Excerpt of Data Cycle 1 Code Book

7.3.3 Hypothesis 2: Change Management

The two hypotheses are presented below

Null Hypothesis (HO): The efficacy of strategic management implementation in Gweru Municipality is not significantly correlated with change management practices.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): The success of Gweru Municipality's strategic management implementation is significantly correlated with change management practices.

The level of significance is 0.5

Table 7.4: Hypothesis 2: Observable values

Change Management	**Successful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Unsuccessful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Total**
High Change management activities	32	8	40
Low Change Management activities	4	27	31
Total	36	35	71

Table 7.5: Hypothesis 2: Expected values

Political Influence	**Successful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Unsuccessful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Total**
High Change Management activities	20.3	19.72	40.02
Low Change Management activities	15.72	15.3	31.02
Total	36.02	35.02	71.04

Table 7.6: Calculation of X^2 Hypothesis 2

Observed Values (O)	**Expected Value (E)**	**(O-E)**	**$(O-E)^2$**	**$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$**
32	20.3	11.7	136.89	6.74
8	19.72	11.72	137.36	6.97
4	15.72	11.72	137.36	8.74
27	15.3	11.7	136.89	8.95
Total				$\sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ $X^2 = 31.4$

Degrees of freedom= (columns-1) (Rows-1)

(2-1) (2-1) = 1x1= 1

Significance level (α) = 0.05

X^2 Tabular = 3.841

X^2 Calculated = 31.4

X^2 Calculated > X^2 Tabular (or called as X^2 Critical)

∴ We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): *The success of Gweru Municipality's strategic management implementation is significantly correlated with change management practices.*

The data set emphasises the importance of change management, supporting the idea that change management is extremely important to the organisation's strategic management. Since it will be remembered from the literature review, the aforementioned hypothesis is consistent with the reviewed literature. According to Damawan and Azizah (2020), change management is a crucial subject in strategic management studies since strategic management brings about many changes that are opposed within the organisation. These themes appear frequently, which implies that they are essential to the organisation's decision-making procedures. An example from a codebook created with NVivo further demonstrates this. It can be noted that just from analysing seven interview transcripts, the subject of change management occurred 127 times, as indicated in the highlighted texts.

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Resistance to Change	In the Gweru Municipality, resistance to change manifests as employee and stakeholder unwillingness to adopt management-implemented new policies, procedures and structures. Employees and stakeholders resist change because they fear unknown outcomes, believe their jobs are at risk, and don't see how the change will benefit them. The effects of this resistance block organizational development and decelerate the implementation of essential municipal reforms.	7	127
Regulatory Compliance	Regulatory compliance means that organizations follow the laws, regulations, guidelines, and specifications that apply to their business activities. This is important for reducing legal risks and promoting ethical practices, which in turn fosters trust with clients and stakeholders. When companies stay compliant with regulations, they can avoid fines and improve their reputation in the market.	8	18

Figure 7. 2 : Excerpt of Data Cycle 6 Code Book

7.3.4 Hypothesis 3: Stakeholder engagement

The two hypotheses are presented below

Null Hypothesis (HO): The efficacy of strategic management implementation in Gweru Municipality is not significantly correlated with change management practices.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): The success of Gweru Municipality's strategic management implementation is significantly correlated with change management practices.

The level of significance is 0.5

Table 7.7: Hypothesis 3: Observable values

Change Management	Successful Implementation of Strategic Management	Unsuccessful Implementation of Strategic Management	Total
High Stakeholder engagement	26	3	29
Low Stakeholder engagement	2	32	34
Total	28	35	63

Table 7.8: Hypothesis 3: Expected values

Political Influence	Successful Implementation of Strategic Management	Unsuccessful Implementation of Strategic Management	Total
High Stakeholder engagement	12.89	16.11	29
Low Stakeholder engagement	15.11	18.89	34
Total	28	35	63

Table 7.9: Calculation of X^2 Hypothesis 3

Observed Values (O)	Expected Value (E)	(O-E)	$(O-E)^2$	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
28	12.89	15.11	228.31	17.71
3	16.11	13.11	171.87	10.67
2	15.11	13.11	171.87	11.37
32	18.89	13.11	171.87	9.1
Total				$\sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ $X^2 = 39.85$

Degrees of freedom= (columns-1) (Rows-1)

(2-1) (2-1) = 1x1= 1

Significance level (α) = 0.05

X^2 Tabular = 3.841

X^2 Calculated = 39.85

X^2 Calculated > X^2 Tabular (or called as X^2 Critical)

∴ We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): *The success of Gweru Municipality's strategic management implementation is significantly correlated with stakeholder engagement.*

The data set emphasises the importance of stakeholder engagement, supporting the idea that stakeholder engagement is extremely important to the organisation's strategic management and organisational performance. As will be remembered from the literature review, Knox, Marin-Cadavid, and Osiri (2024) assert that stakeholder engagement improves an organisation's agility and innovation. Furthermore, the study can draw from Iyobhebhe, John-igbiele, and Olayinka (2024), who argue that stakeholder agreement and adherence to established guidelines and rules influence positive decision-making and procedures within the organisation. Hence, the hypothesis is in line with the reviewed literature. The data's findings support this claim. These themes appear frequently, which implies that they are essential to the organisation's decision-making procedures. An example from a codebook created with NVivo further demonstrates this. It can be noted that just from analysing seven interview transcripts, the subject of stakeholder engagement occurred 75 times, as indicated in the highlighted text.

Name	Field Notes	Files	References
Stakeholder Alignment	Effective stakeholder alignment with high stakeholder participation helps in fostering collaboration among different groups. It ensures a hands-on approach to solving the strategic phased objectives and fulfilling community-specific needs. It also helps streamline engagements between local government officials and residents while aligning interests across different departments, leading to transparency, trust-building, and participatory decision-making processes. The unified strategy will not only ease ethnic tension but also bring a shared perspective on sustainable development and social service delivery in the community.	7	75
Regulatory Compliance	Regulatory compliance means that organizations follow the laws, regulations, guidelines, and specifications that apply to their business activities. This is important for reducing legal risks and promoting ethical practices, which in turn fosters trust with clients and stakeholders. When companies stay compliant with regulations, they can avoid fines and improve their	7	18

Figure 7.3: Excerpt of Data Cycle 4 Code Book (Stakeholder Engagement)

7.3.5 Hypothesis 4: Psychological Antecedents

The two hypotheses are presented below

Null Hypothesis (HO): The success of implementing strategic management in Gweru Municipality is not significantly correlated with psychological antecedents.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): The success of Gweru Municipality's strategic management implementation is significantly correlated with psychological antecedents.

The level of significance is 0.5

Table 7.10: Hypothesis 4: Observable values

Psychological antecedents	**Successful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Unsuccessful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Total**
Positive Psychological antecedents	32	7	39
Negative Psychological antecedents	2	28	30
Total	34	35	69

Table 7.11: Hypothesis 4: Expected values

Political Influence	**Successful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Unsuccessful Implementation of Strategic Management**	**Total**
High Stakeholder engagement	19.22	19.78	39
Low Stakeholder engagement	14.78	15.22	30
Total	34	35	69

Table 7: Calculation of X^2 Hypothesis 4

Observed Values (O)	Expected Value (E)	(O-E)	$(O-E)^2$	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
32	19.22	12.78	163.33	8.5
7	19.78	12.78	163.33	8.3
2	14.78	12.78	163.33	11.1
28	15.22	12.78	163.33	10.73
Total				$\sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ $X^2 = 38.63$

Degrees of freedom= (columns-1) (Rows-1)

(2-1) (2-1) = 1x1= 1

Significance level (α) = 0.05

X^2 Tabular = 3.841

X^2 Calculated = 38.63

X^2 Calculated > X^2 Tabular (or called as X^2 Critical)

∴ We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): *The success of Gweru Municipality's strategic management implementation is significantly correlated with psychological antecedents.*

The data set is utilised to convey the significance of psychological antecedents, thereby upholding the argument that psychological antecedents are significant to the organisation's strategic management. The argument by Lai and Lin (2017) that an organisation is a social system reveals how the hypothesis above concurs with the literature. Apart from that, as will be recalled from the literature review, Nikiforova (2022) describes that employees who have good social capital among them create cooperation and collaboration that contributes to improved strategic plan execution. These are themes that came up every so often; thus, it is assumed that they are key to the organisation's decision-making. Below is a snippet of an NVivo codebook that was developed for this purpose. It is observable that only after reviewing seven interview transcripts, the topic of social antecedents had been discussed 183 times, as recorded in the underlined text.

Social Judgement	Social judgment in an organizational context refers to the ability of individuals to assess and interpret their colleagues' behaviours, intentions, and emotions. It plays a crucial role in decision-making, collaboration, and conflict resolution, influencing how well team members understand and interact with one another.	7	82
Social Perception	Social perception in an organizational context refers to how individuals interpret and understand their colleagues' and leaders' behaviours, intentions, and emotions. It is crucial in shaping interpersonal relationships, influencing team dynamics, and affecting organizational culture and performance.	7	45
Sociological needs	From an organizational perspective, sociological needs refer to the requirements individuals have for social interaction, belonging, and collaboration within a workplace. Meeting these needs fosters community, enhances teamwork, and contributes to a more engaged and productive workforce.	7	56

Figure 7. 4: Excerpt of Data Cycle 4 Code Book (Psychological Antecedents)

7.4 Chapter Summary

The Gweru Municipality dynamics have been scrutinised in the current chapter and four pillars were found to be contributing to the dynamics between informal structures and strategic management. These include psychological antecedents, change management, political influence and stakeholders' involvement. Besides the discussion of using Chi-Square analysis in hypothesis testing and confirmation of qualitative data, the four pillars were emphasised because the study established that these pillars were critical foundations that underpin organisational strategic management. The chapter further outlines the method through which Chi-Square analysis improves research quality by identifying noteworthy correlations between variables (Rana & Singhal, 2015). Formulating hypotheses is also outlined, whereby the four pillars serve as the foundation upon which testable hypotheses for correlation and their impact on strategic performance are formulated. All hypotheses contain null and alternative statements, and 0.05 was used as the level of significance to determine the validity of findings

(Singh, 2022). The overall purpose of this chapter is to learn more about the intricacies that Gweru Municipality is going through in its strategic management function. This chapter attempts to remain objective while commenting on matters and facts presented before it through the application of qualitative observation, with quantitative techniques being used to achieve validity. Testable hypotheses are also described, and the four pillars are utilised as building blocks for testable hypotheses, studying their interaction and strategic outcome effect. Null and alternative statements are employed for all hypotheses, and their results are analysed at a level of significance of 0.05. The chapter is intended to provide a detailed description of the issues and challenges involved in the integration of qualitative understanding and quantitative analysis. The next chapter offers the integration of the evidence from the above analysis to show the way in which psychological variables affect the efficacy of strategic management in Gweru Municipality. From systems theory, the chapter gives us an insight into how all these variables interact and affect strategic performance. It sheds light on the relevance of understanding the organisation as a system.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The last chapter explained the Chi-Square method that was used in the previous chapter, and it detailed the relationship between variables and how qualitative research is more reliable. 0.05 level of significance hypothesis development had to be done to make it stringent. This chapter explored Gweru Municipal's strategic management dynamics and was specific about the governance of this institution. It also elicited debates about structure, agency, and ethics. This chapter outlined and substantiated in detail four broad hypotheses that explained the research questions in the above chapter.

Hypothesis results provided a firm platform upon which to base conclusions from the research. Most significantly, my experience in this research unpacks the collection of information and analysis of findings. In addition, through the approach of systems theory, the study views the various factors influencing the results as interdependent. The methodology recognises the importance of context and relationships in the system and encourages an application of holistic thinking in formulating our recommendations. Our end objective is to utilise the systematic evaluation of the research towards informing practical recommendations that have the potential to support constructive change.

8.2 Overview of the research

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter begins the research by defining in very clear terms the background, aims, and reasons for conducting the study of strategic management within the Gweru Municipality. It formulates the research questions that inform our research as well as sketches the intricate interplay between official strategies and unofficial systems of public administration. The chapter critically reflects upon why the study is significant, discussing its key role in addressing various issues of the governance of the public sector. Through consideration of general strategic management principles, the study comprehended how created rules are applied to the volatile aspects of municipal governance. The above information prompted the study to elaborate on a better understanding of effective management of the public sector.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter combines the research on decision-making, strategic management, change management, stakeholder engagement, and political intervention. The study identified gaps in the current body of literature in strategic management and public administration by analysing the aspects above. This allowed for the formulation of a framework to conceptualise the influence of strategic management in public-run institutions. Different models and theories were tested to understand the Gweru Municipality case. This portrayed the complex way organisations function. It also compelled the research to take into account how individuals make decisions from the parameters used in strategic decision-making. In the Gweru Municipality case, the chapter contributed to a broad academic conversation on strategic management and provided informative content to individuals involved in operating in strategic management.

Chapter 3: Survey of Relevant Scholarship

This chapter reviewed literature on informal organisational structures in public institutions in developing countries, focusing mainly on public administration. To truly understand the topic, we must consider local conditions, cultural practices, and historical factors that have shaped these structures. The literature review gathered views that effective management of informal structures can significantly boost efficiency, transparency, and accountability in public institutions.

Chapter 4: Research Approach and Methodology

This chapter delves at length into the research process, both data collection and analysis. It discusses the qualitative and quantitative research methods and why they were applied. Rather than discussing these research methods in isolation, this chapter discusses how they all combine to probe the topic of discussion in further detail. It defines research ethics as honesty, openness, and respectfulness in the pursuit of knowledge. This places the researcher in the realm of being superior to that of an observer, but of a morally critical thinker. Also, this chapter emphasises the wholesomeness of data acquisition, where emphasis is placed on having participants to allow for real information to be gathered. It explains Chi-Square analysis as a statistical method of testing data, in trying to test variable relationships. The process demonstrates the concurrence of evidence. By bringing together such variables, the chapter anticipates the research process and elicits questioning of what knowledge is. It provokes current understanding and evokes further questioning of the complexities of research in the public arena.

Chapter 5: Data Presentation

Chapter 5 intricately examined the data widely gathered, integrating qualitative and quantitative results. Chapter 5 made the research more aware of the initial environment under which the research was being conducted by categorising the data into four categories: psychological dynamics, change management, political influence, and stakeholder engagement. The research unravelled the intricate relations that determine strategic outcomes. The result provides sharp perceptions and offers top-level variable nature analysis. Employing this approach, the research was in a stronger position to comprehend intricate realities depending on strategic decisions.

Chapter 6: Data analysis and discussion

Data analysis helped the study to gain a clearer understanding of the academic argument underpinning the study. The study emerged the connection between observations and the theoretical lens used in the study (Iceberg Systems theory) in order to make sense of the study phenomenon. This connection allowed the recognition of important patterns and insights within complicated data collections. Additionally, data analysis prompted the study to review how knowledge is construed and interpreted in numbers and words

Chapter 7: Hypothesis Testing

In this chapter, the Gweru Municipality was analysed based on four main areas that define the interface between strategic management and informal structures: psychological antecedents, change management, political influence, and stakeholder engagement. It discusses employing Chi-Square analysis for reinforcing qualitative findings by proving the relationship between other variables, enhancing the validity of the research. The chapter further addresses the way hypotheses are developed and these four fields are reflected in developing claims that are testable at a significance level of 0.05. The focus was to continue learning about the intricate strategic management processes of Gweru through the marriage of qualitative knowledge with quantitative instruments. The subsequent chapter will proceed to investigate how psychological forces lead to the success of strategic management based on systems theory to reveal the interconnectedness of everything. This knowledge is highly significant in guiding subsequent research on the relevance and application of strategic management in public institutions.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

The concluding chapter of the study ties all the elements together. It reviews the key ideas tested and shares personal insights gained during the research process. Examining different factors through a systems theory lens shows how they are interconnected. The chapter encourages taking a comprehensive approach to strategic management. Additionally, it provides practical advice for driving positive change and identifies specific areas that need further research to deepen our understanding of these relationships in the future.

8.3 Objectives and Outcomes

The study presents the primary research and sub-objectives below to refresh our memory.
Primary objective: *The primary objective was to investigate a selected public sector organisation in Zimbabwe and establish how it manages its corporate informal structures.*
To further understand how the public sector is managing informal structures, the study proposed the following sub-objectives:

1. **Sub-Objective 1:** The study sought to examine the role of informal structures in implementing strategic management in a selected public sector organisation.
2. **Sub-Objective 2:** The study investigated whether covert and embedded traits led to contention between informal structures and corporate strategy.
3. **Sub-Objective 3:** The study explored how social antecedents contribute to managing informal structures in the public sector.

   To further explore how the study answered these questions, the subsequent sections address the extent to which the study achieved the set objectives.

8.3.1 Main objective and the outcome

The purpose of the research was to advance the role of informal networking in the selected public sector institution in Zimbabwe. The research acknowledged that such networks play a key role in bridging the gap between rules and desired behaviour in the workplace. This thesis sheds light on how people interact in an effort to construct good rules by situating the intersection between informal networks and formal rules. According to this research, combining decision-making and informal networks empowers employees and stakeholders to become influential, shifting their positions from passive policy recipients to active actors. The research further recorded that such a combination also leads to openness and self-confidence, which are commendable features of ethical management. The research further recorded the adaptability of management learning from the analysis and emergent connection between

formal policy and informal practice as a sign of the possibility of these two systems working together rather than being in conflict. The study also established that flexibility allows for a responsive work culture to changing social and political contexts. Secondly, the study emphasised stakeholders' involvement in governance for optimum effectiveness and the incorporation of diverse voices in public administration. Thirdly, the study continued to re-emphasise that bureaucratic red tape makes the establishment of new options more difficult. It also mentioned resistance to change in the governing party and stated that it was one of the significant barriers towards improving strategic management practice in the organisation.

8.3.2 Sub-Objective 1 and Outcome

The research highlights the role of the informal systems in public sector organisations for information exchange and influence. While the informal networks are not necessarily leading the formal organisational structure, they might be able to make worthwhile additions or become problems for formal processes in adopting strategic initiatives. These loose structures, by being closely in consonance with the dominant organisational culture and social relations, enable cooperation and trust amongst actors, and the organisation can mould itself and take action against forthcoming issues in sufficient time. Informal systems are dualistic in character; they also create ambivalence and bring about change and organisational evolution becomes knotty dynamics. Fuzziness of formal and informal systems is core to managing public organisations. Interdependence moves beyond formalised power relationships to underscore the necessity of effective decision-making that stems from the work environment. The knowledge generated calls for close observation of the web of organisational complexity that prevails, where formal and informal operations are intertwined in an attempt to build people's organisational lived experiences.

8.3.3 Sub-Objective 2 and Outcome

Implicit elements that exert a significant influence on the Zimbabwean public sector may lead to serious issues. The characteristics are informal behaviour and norms that deviate from formalised business practice and protocol. Informal social relationships and affiliations generally precede compliance with established protocols in such settings and thus it appears to manifest in the manner where social capital appears to be prioritised over bureaucratic routine. Reliance on social relationships can allow unmanaged but timely decision-making processes, which creates inefficiencies in operations and governance challenges. The conflict between the fixed organisational structures and adaptive informal social networks has extensive implications for accountability and governance. The conflict complicates the ability

of the organisation to execute its required operations and respond to its regulatory needs effectively. The exercise and establishment of power and authority within the institutional framework may be questioned on a philosophical basis. The question is regarding how governance and control prescribe what individuals have to do and how individuals relate as an acceptable means of accessing knowledge.

8.3.4 Sub-Objective 3 and Outcome

The study established that the far-reaching impact of political and social forces on the evolution and functioning of informal networks of Zimbabwe's public sector needs to be taken into account. Although Zimbabwe might be renowned for its multicultural heritage, it is a politically fragmented state with vast hostility among the reigning elites and the opposition. Under this scenario, a finer appreciation of local culture and the role of local culture in influencing governance is warranted.

Citizen engagement encourages a dialogic response for taking into account multiple perspectives in government policymaking. Such participatory actions increase government credibility and lead to enhanced governance. Encouraging transparency and accountability of formal as well as informal institutions increases active engagement of citizens in civic life. This form of engagement can consolidate public institutions, making them more robust and resilient enough to cope with complexity and rapid social change. By open dialogue, we are able to achieve a better interaction between the state and the people in strengthening the social contract upon which democratic leadership in Zimbabwe is based.

8.3.5 Comparison between findings of the current study and the previous study

Earlier studies discussed many variables such as exposure, past experience, intra-group conflict (group conflict), social fragmentation, organisational stability, and the central role of management in complex organisational political processes. This research, however, implies that the link between informal structures in the public sector and corporate strategy has its origins in a deep anxiety among politicians who view their power base as being stripped away. This is exacerbated by the arcane and dense web of red tape and bureaucracy within the public sector of Zimbabwe. This research takes these factors within the general social, political, and cultural environments in Zimbabwe and investigates further the effect that such social precursors exert on action within institutions and organisational decision-making. Both studies' results appear to concur to some extent, but the present study differentiates between the underlying apprehension of government expansion on the one hand and the felt threat of

government bureaucracy on the other. It also pinpoints the sophistication of multi-dimensional stakeholder relationships, which contribute to the sophistication of managing organisational strategies in such convulsive environments. Thus, the findings create a complex picture of how power relations and bureaucratic momentum entangle the space of informal networks with regard to corporate objectives. Finally, such an analysis requires greater attention to the multiple powers that determine the governance-organisational identity-strategic agency nexus in response to prevailing socio-political contexts.

8.4 Research Contribution

8.4.1 Theoretical contribution

Utilisation of theory as a point of reference in constructing the research problem facilitated the research to move beyond empirical observation, gaining a broader epistemological scope of phenomena in question. In agreement with the above, Van der Waldt (2017) believes that theory enables a study to cover the multidimensionality of a phenomenon. Among the numerous theoretical models, the Iceberg Systems Theory is unique in that it enables the study to conceptualise the intricate dynamics in the Gweru municipality company policies and tacit conventions. The Iceberg systems theory brought to the surface the multi-dimensionality of stakeholders, hegemony of the ruling party, influence of the socio-cultural antecedents and organisational bureaucracy typical of the public sector. In Adom, Hussain and Joe's (2018) contention is that theoretical thinking attempts to make visible underlying forces of organisational behaviour for which formal policies and procedures have yet to emerge in most jurisdictions, but abstract patterns of interaction and governance. Iceberg Systems Theory enables one to see dominant assumptions, beliefs, and informal relational patterns beneath decision-making processes and operational effectiveness. Nikiforova (2022), Xiong (2023), and Mclean et al. (2019) are all on the same page, as outlined above, that Iceberg systems theory allows for a deeper, wider and deeper analysis and comprehension of a phenomenon. Knowing how the public sector operates is important because official strategic advice might be the very opposite of what is assumed to be the case, hence beginning a situation that may be challenging and even dangerous. Secondly, using this theoretical background, it is then possible to comprehend the socio-political context within which such informal institutions are being used and consequently produce a general picture of the impact of power and culture on governance in the Gweru municipality. Using this theory, the research made another contribution other than the present study. The study added to a larger study on dynamic interfaces between informal organisation and formal organisation systems in organisational theory. Apart from adding to the understanding of public management, such theoretical

advances also call for adaptive responses in instances of complexity of human interactions within institutions of governance.

8.4.2 Methodological Contribution

The mixed-methods approach to this specific study proved to be useful and added distinctive value both practically and theoretically, especially concerning social issues in Zimbabwe's public sector. In reference to the research of Bergh et al. (2022), the blending of qualitative and quantitative research methods enables the study of informal and formal structures in public organisations to become more intricate. As discussed earlier, qualitative methods tend to focus on the social and cultural dimensions of organisational behaviour, and this stems from the qualitative aspect of the study. Additionally, interviews and ethnographic observations allow for the capturing of informal dimensions of organisational life to provide a rich and contextualised understanding of organisational systems operations. As discussed by Côté-Boileau et al. (2020), qualitative depth enables the study of more profound meanings, unspoken rules and especially the complex interrelations around governance and power structures. It moves the processes of how decisions are made to a level that a quantitative approach would miss. Conversely, the quantitative approach of this research surfaces a solid basis for deriving broad insights and for making statistical estimates. The research applied Chi-Square as a quantitative technique to confirm or dispute the findings of the research regarding the role of the informal structures. Drawing from Nihan (2020) and Singh (2022), the study presents a plausible and reliable analysis which allows for the recognition of patterns across multiple domains that can inform overarching organisational policy and governance frameworks. Given the blended nature of the methods involved, the mixed-methods approach is particularly befitting for addressing the complex governance and public management problems owing to their underlying multifaceted nature. The study elevates the academic discourse on governance, organisational identity, and strategic agency by confirming results through the framework of qualitative and quantitative analysis . The interpretation and analysis of results are based on the implicit integration of diverse methodologies. The diverse perspectives that this approach allows for strengthen comprehensive conceptualisation of the informal governance structures and the formal governance frameworks, adding to the public administration theory by illustrating how coexistence can foster effective theory building. Moreover, this approach captures the relevance of integrating stakeholders in the research design to foster meaningful participation through design. In addition, the amalgamation of qualitative and quantitative approaches has given rise to the current epistemological change, which is said to promote collective knowledge creation, emphasising how government can be influenced through constructive dialogue. The current research utilises a methodology that

systematically provides an objective critique of the public sector crisis in Zimbabwe and develops the governance and organisational relations debate.

8.4.3 Practical contributions of the study

Based on Hussain, Haque and Baloch (2019) research, it is concluded that in the context of academia, practical contributions extend beyond what can be theoretically developed and aimed at applying knowledge to structure that can be used in practice. Practical usage of study within the municipality of Gweru is highlighted with an emphasis on the complex dynamic of the formal-informal structures that affect the process of making decisions. The findings give a clear inquiry of the interactions between the stakeholders and the procedures of power that will guide policymakers and administrators to build the knowledge and the procedures to advance participatory and inclusive governance regimes. Also, the understanding of the bureaucratic inertia problem and its effect on the strategic equilibrium is a critical reminder to those leaders who need to re-evaluate the strategies of their organisations based on the dynamic socio-political landscape. The application of Iceberg Systems Theory does not only place limits traditionally on the research in a powerful theoretical framework but also increases the comprehension of the cultural and informal networks

8.4.4 Overall Reflections

I came to this scholarly enquiry as a man who has been well rooted in the public sector for more than a decade and in the complex understanding of political chaos, as well as in the degrading bureaucratic tendencies that are specific in such institutions. To emphasise the potential consequences of decreasing the rise in political tensions and fragmentation in the public sector, my preliminary emphasis was confined to two important dimensions, which are dealing with informal structures and exploring strategic management. There was an urge to explain a straightforward way of solving the dilemma and the issues caused by these unofficial networks.

However, the empirical findings showed that the public sector is a predetermined outcome of the natural political developments, which is hard to contain. The assumptions I had prior to this research were confirmed by how most of the study participants showed apprehension, mistrust and reluctance. They were scared; most of them assumed I was a secretive snooper, that I could have some ulterior, underhanded government agendas; that I was working on some hypothetical research project. Also, it was increasingly evident that the historical background of Zimbabwe and the social ills played a considerable role in forming and implementing strategies.

Many informal setups had come into place because of the extensive political interference done by central government powers and this situation grossly bothered the working atmosphere of the local municipalities. It was also observable that employees resisted change greatly as they were apparently psychologically adjusted to the current organisational culture and comfortable with the status quo. This way, the research brought to our attention more difficult and deeper issues that justify the adoption of strategic management and informal structures at municipal levels in emergent developmental states.

*Although I feel that the current research needs to be further developed to learn more about the complicated nature of the issues that the discussed phenomenon entails, I am glad that the present study has provided a solid foundation for a more detailed and in-depth scholarly discourse. I do hope that the knowledge you attain here will only trigger more investigations on the complexity of dynamics in the field of managing the public sector.*8.5 Proposed Framework

8.5.1 Introduction Recap

As presented in the study (Figure 2), employing the theoretical lens posits a model according to which the theoretical lens defines the fact that historical, socioeconomic, and political-legal factors are consistent in supporting how the behaviour of employees arises within the public sector. More importantly, Blokland and Reniers (2015) argue that both institutions and organisations are often concerned with the timely issues, dedicating no attention to the social origins that have always been the contributors to the issues. There is a recommendation on the right side of the model that in order to avoid big response towards the corporate strategy and informal structure, the sociological story must be redrawn and revamped. Additionally, Caillin (2023) insists that the Iceberg model develops a diagnostic attitude towards discovering the root social and philosophical causes that guide the behaviour and simplifies the application of critical thinking (please see figure 2.1)

The adapted model based on Iceberg succeeds in revealing the way historical, social, legal, political, and economic conditions as an invisible force that always transforms and rein constitutes institutions. The result of such conditions is the creation of the informal institutions that tend to undermine the corporate strategy. Also, as the researchers state, the externally visible characteristics of the organisation are but an expression of the contextual and psychological factors under the surface (Reed and Langford, 2021). Primarily, it underlines the significance of proactiveness inherent in the systematic planning by means of predicting the causes of particular organisational qualities. These undertows can considerably contribute

to good decision-making when understood. In conclusion, the modelling provides how important it is to identify the unseen factors that affect organisational relations. The new proposed model is expressed in Figure 8.2 below.

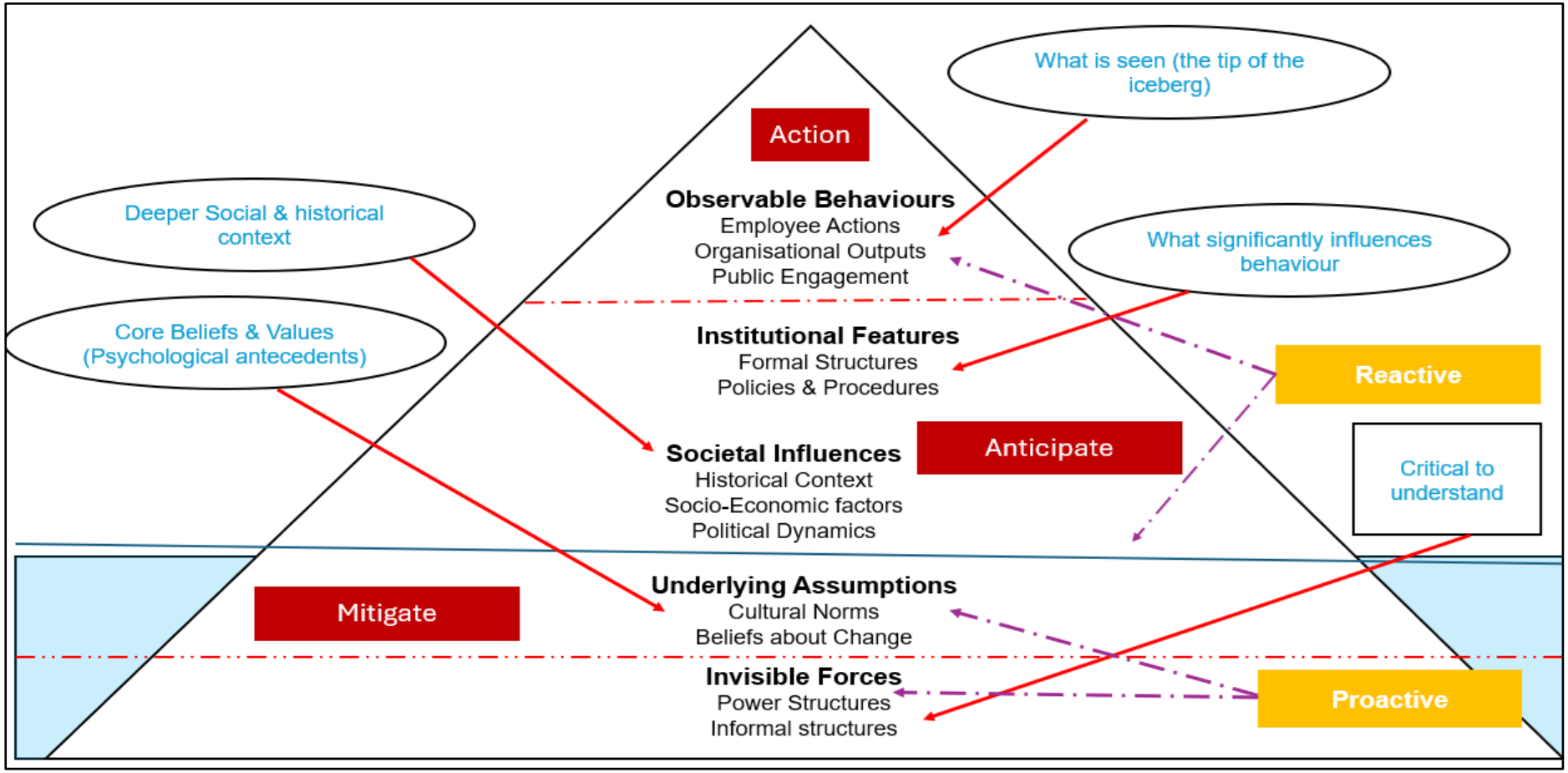

Figure 8.1: The Iceberg model for public sector management

8.5.2 Iceberg model for public sector management

The iceberg model of management in the public sector is a complicated model that elucidates different aspects of organisational behaviour and governance. It is made up of five layers. The conspicuous behaviours at the start of this model comprise the employee behaviours, organisational output and community interaction, which portray the manifestation of the bureaucratic engagement (Blokland & Reniers, 2015) . The second layer under this outer layer lies the area of institutional features and is composed of the formal organisation structures, policies and procedures that are fundamental in forming and moulding behavioural patterns of the public entities. At the lower end of the list of societal forces are political forces, socioeconomic forces, and historical perspectives that characterise and place situations in context, the working environment of the state organisations. Based on (Mclean et al., 2019), it can be ascertained further with greater depth that the assumptions illuminate the vicinity of cultural norms and strongly held beliefs about change, which describes the crucible of theories and psychological bases that influence the behaviour of an individual and the group, serving in the context of the public sector. These assumptions block any attempts to introduce a serious reform to the organisation, and they are tacit assumptions that are very hard to modify. Finally, the model considers the invisible forces which incorporate the informal institutions and power structures that do not work within the formal systems but can hold effective influence on the management processes and decision-making. Public sector leaders must possess a complete grasp of these hidden forces as they navigate the dynamics of governance and strive to execute policies that are consistent with formal mandates as well as the socio-political environment as it was handed down (Celik, 2023). Together, all these layers make an emphasis on the multidimensional interactions between the visible behaviours at the outward surface and the forces working behind the scenes of state sector management, which corresponds to the necessity of a comprehensive organisational development and analysis strategy.

8.6 Recommendations of the study

1. Managing political tensions

A good example of some of the deeper forces that underpin the existence of any organisation is the webs of informal structures that exist. These unofficial systems, which are usually overlooked or written off as secondary, are a significant component in strategic management such that one should recognise and deal with the political, socio-economic, as well as historical forces, which influence these networks. According to the literature review, the informal structures have been overlooked in the sphere of public administration despite being a critical part of the strategic planning and implementation processes (Wada et al., 2023).

2. Stakeholder engagement.

The informal structures must be treated as key components that influence the performance and behaviours in an organisational context, but not as ephemeral factors. To make strategic alignment and coherence be realised, proactive frameworks which expound on these essentially vital aspects are vital since they provide the basis of organisational identity and functionality. Engaging the pertinent stakeholders is essential to this effort as it recreates an environment of collaboration that trounces the possible sources of conflict and reduces the chances of disintegration, which may hinder the group in achieving greater goals. Referring to the exploration of the literature, Joya (2020) refers to one of the authors, Murugesan (2014), who characterises informal structures as social constructs formed to perform specific functions. It is notable that, based on the given definition, the role of strategic management must be regarded as the attempt to align organisational objectives with socially identified objectives of employees. Further, based on the literature reviewed, both Borgatti and Foster (2003) acknowledge moving on to a more relational/less atomistic, essentialist, and individualistic perspective on the view.

3. Synergy (Interdependence and Interconnectedness)

It is in the belief that interdependence and interconnectedness are critical to the liveliness of an organisation that the concept of organisation as a living organism is developed. Each element of the organisation is not a simple cog within a bureaucratic machine but something dynamic which contributes to the overall health of the organisation. Consequently, the importance of fostering open communication is not merely a formality; it is a very necessary procedure that cultivates inclusiveness or, in other words, builds a working environment within which every employee will feel respected and heard. As the review of the literature will recall, according to Knox, Marin-Cadavid, and Oziri (2024), informal structures, as they can be understood, are one of the necessary and comfortable parts of every organisational model. Recognising the need to consider cultural norms, emergent leaders, and informal networks enables organisations to capitalise on such structures to enhance effective communication, collaboration, and organisational performance.

4. Feedback and control

Successful organisations can easily contain the desire to have a channel of unofficial communication by institutionalising such tools as an anonymous suggestion box, monthly feedback sessions, and monthly meetings, among others. Referring to the literature reviewed, Koch and Denner (2022) assert that it is possible to harness the strengths of the informal structure through supporting an open communication culture, encouraging cross-departmental communication, and providing the staff members with an opportunity to establish a meaningful connection outside of their official functions. This will keep the informal networks in line with formal structures, which promote collaboration and lower levels of mistrust. Also, hopefully,

these unofficial leaders and those with immense influence need to be identified and engaged in such informal structures. Such involvement results in synergies that facilitate bridging the perceived differences between informal networks and formal management in an effort to turn informal insights into strategic discussions. Recognising the potential of such a latent power of the unofficial leaders can help an organisation harness a wide range of knowledge and formulate a more refined method of approaching decision-making processes. Interestingly, based on the literature reviewed, the same authors, namely Siciliano and Thompson (2018), affirm that such informal structures tend to play a considerable role in the manner work is done, and decisions are made, as well as employee relationships. Informal structures are very pernicious in most developing countries owing to culture, the legacies of history, and the scarcity of resources.

5. Establishing responsive hierarchies

The empirical research indicates that there is a great degree of discontent of staff with rigid, formal bureaucratic structures. The study further revealed that the growth of flexible, dynamic organisations that pay attention to informal dynamics has become an inevitable phenomenon. Guragain et al. (2024) state that bureaucratic principles and political interference often lead to the appearance of power games and conflicting interests of various stakeholders, which establishes the atmosphere to make cooperation hard. In the pursuit of their political interests, people tend to place their political targets before the general goals of the organisation; this form of divided loyalty may be a cause of reluctance towards change-inducing ventures**.**

Monitoring and assessing informal structures

Lastly, the need to observe and evaluate informal structures could not be overstated. To understand the effect that these networks are having on the organisational performance, leaders will be in a position to know the new patterns and trends that may need strategic initiatives to be recalibrated. The study of Iyobhebhe, John-igbiele, and Olayinka (2024) shows that positive decision-making and organisational processes are impacted by the agreement and adherence to the guidelines and rules by the stakeholders. This will increase the overall effectiveness of the operations as teamwork is promoted. This constant process enhances the general effectiveness of the organisation since constructive informal practices that have been adopted are likely to find their way into the formal management process easily. The study of informal organisational structures shows that it is a rather complicated relationship between multiple factors that requires acknowledgement and involvement. Besides enhancing the stream of strategic management by considering them as active parts of organisational life, the overall potential of the organisation is also enlarged.

8.7 Limitations of the study

The relative lack of sample size in this study is a major limitation to this study; it may not represent the universal opinion and experiences of all employees in the public sector. Moreover, the investigation is only limited to a specific area, which limits the generalisability of the findings to a different location or even contexts with various dynamics of politics and social lives. Self-reported data are also widely used in the study and are prone to bias as the participants can choose to provide skewed responses based on their opinions and social desirability. The focus of this study primarily revolves around the strategic management and informal structures, which may omit other valuable factors that have a significant impact on the dynamics of the public sector, such as externally applied pressure of stakeholders or financial hardship. The other constraint may lie in the time factor as the data gathered was taken at a given instance, meaning that I cannot analyse how these forces would take shape and change over the future. Moreover, another possibility is that there is a lack of analysis in exploring issues inherent to political changes in the public sector, which poses a limitation to the level of analysis with regard to their impact on the aspects of organisational behaviour. Lastly, reliance on existing theories and models can constrain creativity since the study does not explore in detail other frameworks of thinking that could bring a new outlook on the issues.

8.8 Future studies

Future research studies could also explore the dynamics of informal networks within a range of public sector organisations in order to improve an understanding of how informal networks influence employee behaviour and performance within an organisation. Focusing on cross-national comparison, studies can take into consideration the role played by historical context, in that the management of developmental states in the developing world involves strategic management. A deeper examination of the psychological factors that influence resistance to change by the employees in the public sector could be the solution in illuminating effective methods of change management. Other studies might be conducted to observe the influence of external political factors on local politics regarding to how the manoeuvres of the federal government influence municipal working conditions. Finally, the research concerning the realisation of the proposed Iceberg model in an authentic setting could also prove its practicality and provide valuable recommendations about how to handle the country’s government.

8.9 Chapter Summary

Overall, this study has highlighted the multifaceted nature of the management of the public sector, as it has been shown that political, social, and historical contexts have a lot of impact on organisational frameworks and performance of the involved employees. The learning experience illustrates the importance of a strategy which will identify and address the key components that impact informal networks as well as bureaucratic impediments. The introduction of the Iceberg model by the study forms a background that would help in the thinking and critical thinking process, which helps in the understanding of the institutional environment better. Finally, the paper preconditions the further analyses of the complexity of the work of the government and fosters a more holistic perspective on institutional change. To promote meaningful enhancements in the public sector in future, these findings have to be engaged by the stakeholders.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Summary of Field Journal

Introduction

The data cycles that emerged and were developed in the present research were systematically recorded in the researcher's field journal using memos. The qualitative approach of reflection and notation was a pivotal part of documenting the dynamic world of participant responses and thematic trends. The field journal was both a chronological storage of data and the locus of analytical reflection where data were converted into an organised understanding.

Each data cycle consists of open codes categorised based on common meanings and contextual significance. These open codes are the initial level of thematic disaggregation and serve as the basis for the qualitative data analysis. The constant comparison process was used to abstract open codes into parent codes, which represent a higher-level synthesis of ideas. The result of these parent codes is a consequence of thematic subsumption. This process can be described as the collapsing of related or similar open codes into larger categories that may facilitate coherent interpretation and analysis.

The purpose of this thematic synthesis was not to have a disjointed or independent analysis. The subsumption approach ensures that participants' depth of insight is not lost without being overwhelmed by too many details. NVivo 15 was used to facilitate this analytical rigour, enabling categorisation, refinement, and visualisation of code clusters. Finally, this methodology guarantees that the results not only have a descriptive but also an analytically and interpretively significant character.

This appendix provides a brief yet critical summary of the six data cycles, which serve as the empirical basis of the study. The individual data cycles capture each time point of saturation and revelation throughout the research process, adding value to the broader picture of strategic planning processes in Gweru Municipality.

Data Cycles Development

Although the initial research questions set the parameters for the inquiry, the data cycles developed intuitively as the researcher interacted with participants. Overall development of each data cycle was determined by the appearance of saturation points, when new data did not give significantly new information. This dynamic process also demonstrates a fundamental tenet of qualitative research: allowing the data to speak.

The researcher also allowed the information to change the path of the investigation as themes started recurring and solidifying, leading to further investigation of the emerging

patterns. This also supports the worth of participant-led discovery, where the meaning is not imposed.

It is essential to note that the codes used in the analysis were not open codes but parent codes, carefully synthesised categories that summarise the participants' wider sentiments. This is an indication of the holistic interpretive lens through which the analysis not only entertains superficial observations but also probes the structures of meaning.

The discrepancy between the data cycles, that some are more conceptually rich than others, is not a methodological error, but a natural manifestation of qualitative saturation. This is not the case with insight, which does not present itself in steady flows but rather in bursts, shaped by participants' dynamics and the depth of the theme at various points in the research.

Data Cycle 1

The initial data cycle consisted of interviews with five research participants, yielding 27 open codes in NVivo 15. During coding, issues were found to be clustered by governance and identity. Towards the end of the fifth interview, some patterns began to emerge, indicating early signs of saturation.

The conceptual similarity between necessary codes included the central government policy, the colonial legacy, the post-colonial effects, ethnic and tribal divisions, and internal/external politics, which were therefore included under a wider parent code: *Political Dynamics*. This amalgamative code brings together the interaction between past and current governance frameworks in defining strategic planning practices.

It was initially difficult to gain participants' immediate attention and trust; however, as the discussions evolved, rapport was established, leading to deeper reflections and more candid insights.

Transition Between Data Cycle 1 and Data Cycle 2

The transition from Data Cycle 1 to Data Cycle 2 represented a move from a descriptive phase to a more analytical one. The numerous open codes identified in the first cycle were systematically examined for conceptual overlap. Through NVivo clustering, related codes—such as *colonial legacy*, *policy imposition*, and *ethnic alignment*—were subsumed under the broader conceptual framework of *political and governance dynamics*.

This process of subsumption elevated the analysis to a higher level of abstraction, where the researcher began to understand not merely *what* participants said, but *why* their perspectives clustered around certain institutional power relations. Thus, the thematic focus shifted from *historical context* to *structural implications*, signalling the maturation of the analytical framework.

Data Cycle 2

In the second round of data, 11 codes would actually be reduced into parent categories. The fact that the individual codes reduced in number between the first and the second data cycle is an indication of the narrowing of conceptual categories, as well as the thematic terrain becoming more mature.

This decrease corresponds to the analytical strategy proposed by Willig (2013) and discussed by Brailas, Tragou, and Papachristopoulos (2023): a strategy of promoting thematic understanding and analytical cohesiveness. Subsumption is a means of moving towards a higher level of synthesis. The combination of codes makes it possible to identify meta-themes that are closer to the participants' lived experiences and perceptions.

The use of this approach in this data cycle led to a more transparent interpretation and a greater analytical focus than excessively fragmented data; it also led to a more subtle grasp of the strategic issues.

Transition Between Data Cycle 2 and Data Cycle 3

The shift from Data Cycle 2 to Data Cycle 3 involved refining parent codes into interpretive categories. Codes initially associated with *political dynamics* began to merge with emergent codes such as *organisational identity* and *informal structures*.

This subsumption highlighted the interconnectedness between formal authority and informal influence within municipal systems. The analytical focus evolved from macro-political interpretations to micro-organisational behaviours, illustrating how governance philosophies were enacted through institutional cultures. In essence, abstraction deepened from the *external policy environment* to the *internal institutional ecosystem*.

Data Cycle 3

Data cycle three was one of the more focused and intense phases. The initial 11 codes were narrowed to 7 parent codes, with new codes such as *social context*, *organisational fragmentation*, and *organisational culture* added.

This step of the analysis highlighted the interaction between informal organisational operations and formal strategic processes. Respondents noted that informal networks both supported and destabilised official strategies, revealing that alignment between organisational culture and strategic objectives is essential.

This cycle indicates the strength of informal structures in shaping institutional coherence.

Transition Between Data Cycle 3 and Data Cycle 4

As Data Cycle 3 matured, the analytical scope broadened from internal organisational dynamics to systemic interactions. Codes such as *organisational culture* and *fragmentation* were absorbed into higher-level abstractions like *institutional coherence* and *strategic alignment*.

The transition thus captured a conceptual movement from internal social processes to systemic governance concerns. The progression also showed how emergent patterns at the micro level, such as cultural behaviours, inform macro-level outcomes like stakeholder coordination and regulatory compliance.

Data Cycle 4

Data cycle four showed a slight increase in the number of codes, as new concepts such as *stakeholder alignment* and *regulatory compliance* emerged. These became key determinants of strategic planning outcomes.

This reorientation reflects a thematic maturation from cultural and social issues to systemic and regulatory frameworks. Respondents noted that alignment with statutory provisions is essential to ensure the effectiveness of strategic planning.

Transition Between Data Cycle 4 and Data Cycle 5

Between Data Cycle 4 and Data Cycle 5, analytical abstraction evolved from compliance and coordination towards examining *structural impediments*. Codes related to *regulatory frameworks* and *stakeholder alignment* were conceptually subsumed under the broader theme of *institutional bureaucracy*.

Institutional bureaucracy.

This shift reflects a higher level of analytical synthesis — moving from identifying external constraints to interrogating internal systemic failures that limit strategic planning. The analytical focus, therefore, progressed from *how governance frameworks are followed* to *how they structurally inhibit responsiveness*. This transition marks an essential deepening of interpretation: while earlier cycles described institutional formality, this stage analysed institutional rigidity and dysfunction as entrenched barriers to adaptive strategy.

Data Cycle 5

A new parent code introduced by Data Cycle Five, **complex bureaucratic systems**, summarised many of the challenges mentioned above. Other themes were similar to previous data cycles and no longer produced significantly new information.

Respondents identified bureaucratic inertia as pervasive in Gweru Municipality — a condition fuelled by political relations and institutional hierarchies. These results echo

Guragain et al. (2024), who noted that delays, resistance, and diminished innovation potential often accompany bureaucratic entanglement.

This cycle demonstrates a recurring contradiction: the municipality's structural inability to respond to emerging needs, which deprives strategic planning of adaptability. Political interference is seen as both a facilitator and a decelerator of progress, depending on how it aligns with organisational objectives.

Thus, Data Cycle 5 moved the analysis beyond administrative procedures into understanding **how systemic rigidity interacts with political behaviour**, forming the backbone of stagnation in the organisation's strategic processes.

Transition Between Data Cycle 5 and Data Cycle 6

The transition from Data Cycle 5 to Data Cycle 6 represents the **culmination of the analytical trajectory** — a movement from systemic description to psychological and cultural interpretation. The codes previously focused on structural barriers (bureaucracy, hierarchy, and proceduralism) were subsumed into higher-order abstractions such as **organisational resistance**, **change aversion**, and **institutional conservatism**.

Here, the researcher recognised that what appeared to be bureaucratic inefficiency was, in many cases, a manifestation of *fear-driven resistance* to change and innovation. The abstraction process thus merged external systemic challenges with internal cultural factors, yielding a holistic framework of institutional inertia.

This integrative synthesis — combining structural, political, and psychological dimensions — prepared the analysis for its final stage, where saturation was reached. The theoretical elevation achieved in this transition justifies the closure of the iterative cycles at Data Cycle 6.

Data Cycle 6

In the final data cycle, the theme of **resistance to change** became central, along with issues related to *change management complexity* and *resource allocation*. The parent codes of this cycle reflected not just structural impediments but also psychological and cultural elements — revealing an entrenched organisational aversion to innovation.

Participants described the culture as **conservative, risk-averse**, and led by a leadership style that prioritised stability over progress. This, in turn, resulted in *low organisational motivation*, *fear of experimentation*, and *minimal strategic renewal*.

The emotional and cognitive aspects of resistance — including anxiety, fear of failure, and uncertainty — emerged as critical obstacles to effective strategic planning. Compliance, previously considered a governance strength, was reinterpreted as a **cultural predisposition** that limited initiative and responsiveness.

Muronda and van der Waldt (2023) reinforce this view by noting that Zimbabwean local governments often lack legal autonomy, thereby exacerbating organisational passivity. Thus, even well-intentioned reforms falter when institutional culture resists adaptation.

At this stage, **data saturation was reached** — no new themes emerged, and existing categories showed internal stability and conceptual closure. The analytical journey from Data Cycle 1 through Data Cycle 6 thus concludes with a comprehensive framework explaining how *political heritage, institutional culture, and bureaucratic complexity collectively inhibit strategic planning innovation* in Gweru Municipality.

Overview of Transitions and Analytical Progression

Across all six data cycles, a clear developmental logic guided the analytical process — each cycle representing an incrementally higher order of abstraction:

1. **Data Cycle 1** – Surface-level thematic exploration; descriptive and fragmented codes; rapport-building with participants.
2. **Data Cycle 2** – Consolidation and early conceptual synthesis; the emergence of parent codes (e.g., political and governance dynamics).
3. **Data Cycle 3** – Refinement of categories; focus on organisational culture and informal structures.
4. **Data Cycle 4** – Expansion into systemic themes; inclusion of regulatory and stakeholder alignment dimensions.
5. **Data Cycle 5** – Structural synthesis; recognition of bureaucratic rigidity as an institutional pathology.
6. **Data Cycle 6** – Cultural and psychological synthesis; resistance to change identified as the core explanatory variable; saturation achieved.

The analytical movement between cycles was not linear but dialectical — where reflection on one phase informed and reshaped the understanding of previous insights. This iterative process epitomised the **constant comparative method** central to grounded qualitative research, with NVivo 15 serving as a computational aid to theoretical saturation and coherence.

Conclusion: The Analytical Arc and Thematic Maturity

Through six cycles of data collection and iterative abstraction, the research achieved a complete conceptual map of **strategic planning limitations within Gweru**

Municipality. Each transition not only refined the data but also revealed the multi-layered character of the institution: political, structural, social, and psychological.

By the final data cycle, themes were no longer isolated findings but **integrated dimensions** of a single explanatory framework — a hallmark of mature qualitative interpretation.

Thus, **Data Cycle 6 marks the terminus of analytical progression and conceptual saturation**, where the codes have been fully subsumed into coherent meta-themes that encapsulate the essence of the participants' lived experiences and the structural conditions under which they operate.

Appendix B

Postgraduate studies and research
Graduate Centre for Management
Business & Management Sciences Faculty
District Six Campus, Hanover and Tennat Street
Zonnebloem | 8000 | Cape Town

To whom it may concern

Re: Introductory letter for the collection of research data

Dr Arther Kadakure is registered for the **Doctor of Public Administration** degree at CPUT with student number **212289888.** The thesis is titled **"Implementation of Strategic Management in a Selected Public Sector in Zimbabwe,"** and aims at exploring the implementation of corporate strategy in the public sector. The principal supervisor is **Dr Michael Twum-Darko**.

In order to meet the requirements of the University's Higher Degrees Committee (HDC) the student must get consent to collect data from organizations which they have identified as potential sources of data. In this case the student will issue a questionnaire to gather relevant data.

If you agree to this, you are requested to complete the attached form (an electronic version will be made available to you if you so desire) and print it on your organisation's letterhead.

For further clarification on this matter please contact either the supervisor(s) identified above, or the Departmental Research Committee Secretary at 021 460 3833.

Regards

Dr Michael Twum-Darko

(Acting) Head of Department
Graduate Centre for Management
Faculty of Business and Management Sciences

Email: darkom@gmail.com

Date: 25 April 2021

Appendix C

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE CHAMBER SECREATRY

CITY of GWERU

CHAMBER SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT
Municipal Offices
P.O. Box 278 Gweru, Telephone 263-054-224071-9
Fax 263-054-222979-Gweru, Zimbabwe:

If calling or phoning this matter.
Please ask for
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

Your Ref:
Our Ref: JN/en

13th May 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

I Japson Nemuseso in my capacity as Human Resources Manager at Gweru City Council give consent in principle to allow Arthur Kadakure, a student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), to collect data in this company as part of his Doctor of Public Administration research. The student has explained to me the nature of his/her research and the nature of the data to be collected.

This consent in no way commits any individual staff member to participate in the research, and it is expected that the student will get explicit consent from any participants. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at some future time.

In addition, the company's name may or may not be used as indicated below.

	Thesis	Conference paper	Journal article	Research poster
Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
No				

Yours faithfully,

JAPSON NEMUSESO
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

13 May 2021

CITYOF- GWERU
13 MAY 2021
CHAMBER SECRETARY
PO. BOX278.

Appendix D

APPENDIX 15

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Faculty of Business and Management Sciences
Ethics informed consent form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Category of Participants (tick as appropriate):

Staff/Workers		*Teachers*		*Parents*		*Lecturers*		*Students*	
Other (specify)									

You are kindly invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Arthur Kadakure from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The findings of this study will contribute towards (tick as appropriate):

An undergraduate project		*A conference paper*	
An Honours project		*A published journal article*	*x*
A Masters/doctoral thesis	*x*	*A published report*	

Selection criteria
You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are:

- The study utilises a heterogeneous purposive sampling approach which qualifies a participant based on their appreciation of the topic. The fact that you have qualified to be a participant means you have the necessary exposure to the topic under investigation.

The information below gives details about the study to help you decide whether you would want to participate.

Title of the research:

Implementation of strategic management: An investigation of informal structures in a selected public sector in Zimbabwe

A brief explanation of what the research involves:

The purpose of this research is:

The study is aimed at exploring the influence of informal structures on the implementation of corporate strategy in the public sector. To be able to address the aim of the study the study will consider the following objectives:

1) To investigate informal structures and their influence on the implementation of corporate strategy in the municipality of Gweru

2) To determine the covert and embedded traits that may lead to contention between informal structures and corporate strategy.

3) To develop a general framework that may contribute to the management of informal structures both in the private and public sectors.

……

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study the following will be done:

1. Describe the main research procedures to you in advance, so that you are informed about what to expect;
2. Treat all interviewees with respect by arriving on time for all the interview schedules and well prepared;
3. Conduct an introduction with the interviewee in order to break ice;
4. All the interviewees will be asked for permission to record the interviews and also take some note where applicable;
5. In a case where there is no clarity, the interviewees will be allowed to ask for confirmation or clarity of words/sentences/phrases to ensure accuracy of the data collected;
6. Participants will be told that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs;
7. Participants will be given the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer or feel uncomfortable with;
8. Participants will be told that questions do not pose any realistic risk of distress or discomfort, either physically or psychologically, to them;
9. At the end of each interview all the interviewees will be thanked for their time and information provided for this study;
10. Participants will be debriefed at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study).

You are invited to contact the researchers should you have any questions about the research before or during the study. You will be free to withdraw your participation at any time without having to give a reason.

Kindly complete the table below before participating in the research.

Tick the appropriate column		
Statement	Yes	No
1. I understand the purpose of the research.		
2. I understand what the research requires of me.		
3. I volunteer to take part in the research.		
4. I know that I can withdraw at any time.		
5. I understand that there will not be any form of discrimination against me as a result of my participation or non-participation.		
6. Comment:		

Please sign the consent form. You will be given a copy of this form on request.

Signature of participant	Date

Researchers

	Name:	Surname:	Contact details:
1.	Arthur	Kadakure	0715808832
2.			

Contact person: Arthur Kadakure	
Contact number: +27715808832	Email:actick15@gmail.com

Interview Schedule for Doctor of Public Administration

Topic: Implementation of Strategic Management in a Selected Public Sector in Zimbabwe

Background Variables

1. Personal Background

(a) Briefly give an account of your background

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(b) How has your professional background facilitated your contributions to strategic planning?

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(c) Have you received any formal training or exposure to strategic planning?

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2. Implementation of Strategic Management

(a) Can you provide an overview of the current strategic management practices within your organisation?

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(b) Comment on the effectiveness of the implementation of strategic management practices within your organisation.

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(c) Is the strategic management implementation process inclusive

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3. Social Context

(a) How do social factors influence the implementation of strategic management within your organisation?

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(b) What are the key social challenges that impact the effectiveness of strategic management initiatives?

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4. Political Context

(a) How do political dynamics shape the strategic management approach within your organisation?

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(b) What role do political structures play in the development and execution of strategic management initiatives?

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(c) Is there political polarisation within your organisation?

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(i) If your answer is yes please provide more detail

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5. Economic Context

(a) How does the economic environment affect the implementation of strategic management in the public sector?

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(b) What are the economic barriers or opportunities that impact strategic management efforts in your organisation?

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6. Historical Context

(a) How has the historical context of Zimbabwe influenced the evolution of strategic management practices within the public sector?

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(b) Are there any historical factors that continue to impact strategic management implementation today?

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7. Organizational Culture

(a) What is the prevailing organizational culture within your organisation?

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(b) How does this culture impact the adoption and execution of strategic management strategies?

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8. Key Challenges and Recommendations

(a) What are the key challenges and opportunities for improving the implementation of strategic management within the public sector in Zimbabwe?

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(b) Are there any specific recommendations for enhancing strategic management practices based on the social, political, economic, historical, and organizational context?

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Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your insights are greatly appreciated.

Appendix E

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

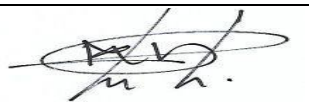
P.O. Box 1906 | Bellville 7535
Symphony Road Bellville 7535
South Africa
Tel: +27 21 4603291
Email: fbmsethics@cput.ac.za

Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee	**FACULTY: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES**

The Faculty's Research Ethics Committee (FREC) on **14 September 2021**, ethics **APPROVAL** was granted to **Arthur Kadakure (212289888)** for a research activity for **Doctor of Public Administration** at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of dissertation / thesis / project:	**Implementation of strategic management: An investigation of informal structures in a selected public sector in an African country** Lead Supervisor (s): Dr M Twum-Darko / Prof R K Tengeh

Decision: APPROVED

	**14 September 2021**
Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee	**Date**

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the CPUT Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study requires that the researcher stops the study and immediately informs the chairperson of the relevant Faculty Ethics Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, notably compliance with the Bill of Rights as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (the Constitution) and where applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003 and/or other legislations that is relevant.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after two (2) years for Masters and Doctorate research project from the date of issue of the Ethics Certificate. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report (REC 6) will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Clearance Certificate No | 2021_FBMSREC 054

Appendix F

Kingdom Editing

26 Cinnamon Street, Kuils River, 7580
takutau@gmail.com
079 636 8353

Declaration of Professional Editorial Assistance for PhD Dissertation

Professional editorial work undertaken in the preparation of this dissertation was done according to CPUT guidelines.

Professional editorial intervention was restricted to: Proof reading, formatting, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and clarity of meaning.

The professional editor provided advice on grammar and structure; gave examples only and did not undertake a structural rewrite themselves.

Material for editing or proofreading was submitted in hard copy, or where an electronic copy was submitted to the editor, their mark-up was done using Track Changes.

Candidate's Name: Arthur Kadakure **Student Number:** 212289888

Dissertation Title: Implementation of Strategic Management: An Investigation of Informal Structures in a Selected Public Sector in an African Country

Qualification: Doctor of Philosophy: Public Administration

Editor's Name: Takudzwa Musiyarira

I declare that I have edited and proofread this dissertation in compliance with the above conditions, as requested by the candidate.

The documents submitted by the student for proofreading or editing purposes remain the sole and exclusive intellectual property of the student.

Signed: ..... Date: 19/05/2025

Professional Editors' Guild