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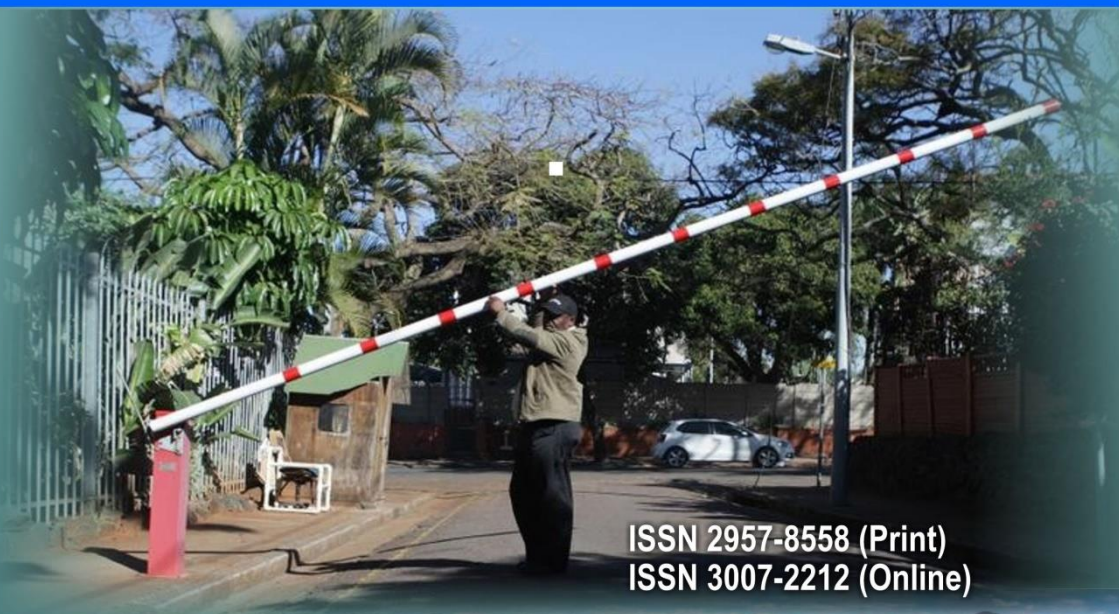

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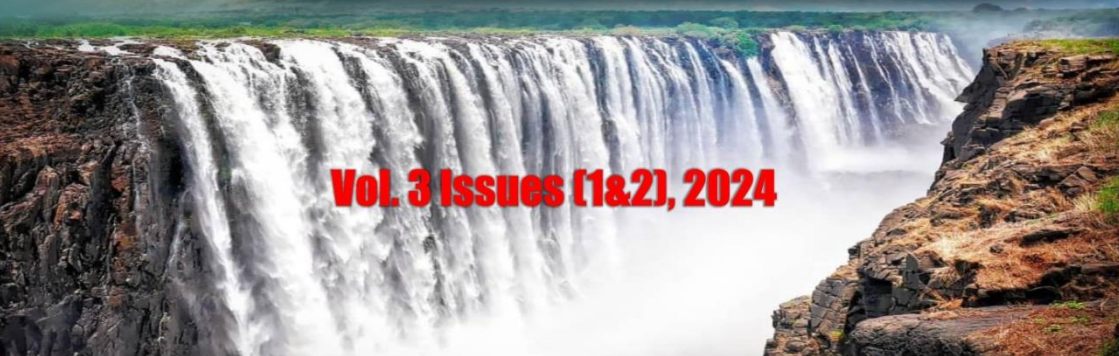

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# About the Journal

## JOURNAL PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Ngenani - Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Journal of Community Engagement and Societal Transformation Review and Advancement,* is to provide a forum for community engagement and outreach.

## CONTRIBUTION AND READERSHIP

Sociologists, demographers, psychologists, development experts, planners, social workers, social engineers and economists, among others whose focus is on community development.

## JOURNAL SPECIFICATIONS

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## SCOPE AND FOCUS

The journal is a forum for the discussion of ideas, scholarly opinions and case studies of community outreach and engagement. Communities are both defined in terms of people found in a given locale and defined cohorts, like the children, the youth, the elderly and those living with a disability. The strongest view is that getting to know each community or sub-community is a function of their deliberate participation in matters affecting them by the community itself. The journal is produced bi-annually.

# Guidelines for Scholars for the Journal

Articles must be original contributions, not previously published and should not be under consideration for publishing elsewhere.

**Manuscript Submission:** Articles submitted to the *Ngenani - Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Journal of Community Engagement and Societal Transformation* are reviewed using the double-blind peer review system. The author's name(s) must not be included in the main text or running heads and footers.

**A total number of words:** 5000-7000 words and set in 12-point font size width with 1.5 line spacing.
**Language:** British/UK English
**Title:** must capture the gist and scope of the article
**Names of scholars**: beginning with the first name and ending with the surname
**Affiliation of scholars**: must be footnoted, showing the department and institution or organisation.
**Abstract:** must be 200 words
**Keywords:** must be five or six containing words that are not in the title
**Body**: Where the scholars are more than three, use *et al.,*
Italicise *et al., ibid.,* words that are not English, not names of people or organisations, etc. When you use several scholars confirming the same point, state the point and bracket them in one bracket and ascending order of dates and alphabetically separated by semi-colon e.g. (Falkenmark, 1989, 1990; Reddy, 2002; Dagdeviren and Robertson, 2011; Jacobsen *et al.,* 2012).

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# AN EVALUATION OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MANUFACTURING SMALL-TO-MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN MASHONALAND WEST PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE

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## Abstract

***Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) within the Zimbabwean manufacturing sector play a pivotal role in the nation's economic growth. This study critically investigates the role of training and development programmes to enhance the performance of manufacturing SMEs in Mashonaland West Province. The study was underpinned by pragmatism research philosophy. Structured questionnaires and structured interview guides were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from 80 respondents. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlations while qualitative data were analysed using NVivo. The main study findings establish that there is a positive relationship between training and development and performance of manufacturing SMEs. Study findings show that in the rapidly evolving business landscape, maintaining a competitive edge requires continuous investment in upskilling and***

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***reskilling the workforce. The study establishes that in the manufacturing sector, where innovation is a key driver of success, training and development can foster a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability. This can lead to the development of new products, processes, or business models, ultimately enhancing the competitiveness of the organisation. The study revealed that investing in training and development demonstrates an organisation's commitment to its employee that can positively impact employee engagement, morale and retention. Well-trained and empowered employees are more likely to feel valued, contributing to higher job satisfaction and reduced turnover rates. Retaining skilled and experienced personnel is crucial for maintaining institutional knowledge and driving continuous improvements within manufacturing SMEs. The recommendations proffered by the study are that manufacturing SMEs should adopt a strategic, data-driven approach. This includes assessing skill gaps, aligning training objectives with business goals and continuously evaluating the impact of training initiatives on key performance indicators. By investing in the training and development of their workforce, manufacturing SMEs can enhance productivity, foster innovation, improve employee engagement and ultimately strengthen their overall competitiveness in the market.***

**Keywords:** *Training, development, manufacturing, enterprises, productivity.*

## INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

Manufacturing SMEs are the backbone of many developing economies, playing a critical role that extends far beyond just production (World Bank, 2022). SMEs are major employers, often accounting for over 70% of total jobs in developed countries (International Growth Centre, 2023). This creates a ripple effect, generating income opportunities for a large segment of the population and contributing to poverty reduction. Beyond just quantity, SME jobs can also provide crucial

entry points into the formal workforce, fostering the development of valuable skills and experience. For example, in India, the garment industry, teeming with SMEs, employs millions of workers, particularly women in rural areas (Deeba, 2020). This not only offers them economic independence, but also empowers them to participate more actively in society.

Global research observes how SMEs promotes economic diversification and innovation (Finscope, 2022; World Trade Organisation, 2016). Unlike large corporations with rigid structures, SMEs are nimble and adaptable. They quickly fill niches in the market that larger players might miss, catering to specific local needs and preferences (Kajongwe *et al*, 2021). This fosters a more diversified and resilient economy, less vulnerable to fluctuations in global markets. For instance, in Kenya, faced with unreliable access to grid electricity, small-scale manufacturers have emerged to address this challenge (Erdin and Ozkaya, 2020). They produce innovative solar lighting solutions, providing affordable clean energy to off-grid communities. This not only benefits local residents but also paves the way for a more sustainable future.

Local production and import substitution is promoted by harnessing training and development of employees in the manufacturing sector (Manyati and Mutsau, 2019). By producing goods that are otherwise imported, SMEs can reduce a country's reliance on foreign products. This keeps money circulating within the national economy and promotes self-sufficiency (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ), 2022). Local production can also lead to greater quality control and products better suited to local needs and conditions.

L'Écuyer *et al. (*2019) note how Vietnam's furniture industry provides a prime example of manufacturing high-quality furniture using their local materials. This not only competes effectively with established

international brands but also reduces dependence on imports, fostering a more robust domestic economy. Also, there is increased exports and participation in Global Value Chains (Hernita *et al.*, 2021). With the right support and infrastructure, SMEs can evolve into competitive exporters, generating valuable foreign exchange for their home countries. They can integrate into global value chains, supplying components or finished goods to larger international manufacturers. Ethiopia's government has actively supported the growth of leather product SMEs (Unnikrisharian *et al.*, 2015). These companies are now exporting high-quality handbags and shoes to international markets, showcasing the potential of SMEs to become not just local players but also significant contributors to a nation's export earnings.

The definition of a SMEs has never been universally agreed upon (OECD, 2019; Makate *et al.*, 2019). Researchers have attempted to define SMEs using quantitative and qualitative criteria. The number of employees, the value of the company's assets and the amount of revenue are examples of quantitative measures. Organisational structure and corporate legal autonomy are also crucial identifying features (Manuere *et al.*, 2018). The number of employees, the industry in which they operate, the type of ownership structure they have and the frequency with that they change hands are all other characteristics that have been and continue to be used to categorise SMEs (Mukorera, 2019). The most frequent way to describe a small business is to quantify the number of employees (OECD, 2019). SMEs are defined in three ways: by international organisations, by national law and by private industry.

Zimbabwe's economic landscape is heavily influenced by the dynamism of SMEs, particularly those engaged in manufacturing. These enterprises, constituting approximately 90% of all registered companies (Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and

Medium Enterprises Development, 2020), contribute significantly to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment generation (ZimStat, 2022).

Manufacturing SMEs are the cornerstone of Zimbabwe's economic growth. Their agility and adaptability allow them to embrace innovation and cater to local needs, fostering economic diversification and job creation. Mashonaland West Province is home to more than 390 871 SMEs that constitutes 11.6% of the total population in Zimbabwe (Finscope, 2022). The rapid expansion of SMEs in Zimbabwe's manufacturing sector has been a key factor in the country's GDP growth that reached 60% in 2022 (Finscope, 2022). The government recognises the importance of SMEs as a growth engine and job creator, particularly due to their high labour-to-capital ratio, that offers a strategy for a rapid economic turnaround (ZEDCO, 2023).

Within the domain of human resource management, Training and Development (T&D) represents a strategic and systematic approach to enhancing the capabilities of a workforce. It encompasses a comprehensive range of learning activities designed to cultivate the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) of employees (Rauch and Hatak, 2016). T&D can be further differentiated into two primary yet interconnected functions. Training focuses on equipping employees with the specific, task-oriented KSAs necessary for proficient execution of their current job duties (Mukorera, 2019: OECD, 2019). Training programmes typically address immediate needs and ensure employees possess the requisite skills to perform their roles effectively. Examples include software application training, machinery operation instruction, or customer service protocol workshops. The successful implementation of training programmes demonstrably leads to increased efficiency, improved accuracy and enhanced task completion within a designated role (Watambwa and Chilongo, 2021).

Development adopts a broader perspective, aiming to prepare employees for future growth and potential within the organisation (Tulekdarie *et al*, 2023). Development initiatives foster a wider range of KSAs that are applicable across various aspects of the business. Examples include leadership development programmes, coaching and mentoring initiatives, or attendance at conferences focused on industry trends and best practices. The outcomes associated with development programmes encompass enhanced problem-solving skills, increased adaptability, improved readiness for career advancement and the cultivation of a more strategic perspective amongst the workforce (Chiwara, 2016). By strategically integrating both training and development components, organisations can create a well-rounded and highly skilled workforce. Effective T&D programmes ensure employees are proficient in their current roles while simultaneously preparing them to take on more complex challenges and contribute significantly to the long-term success of the organisation (Mashavira *et al,* 2019).

Training and Development programmes emerge as a powerful tool to address the challenges faced by SMEs. These programmes encompass a range of initiatives designed to equip employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their roles (Hernita *et al*, 2021). Training and Development covers technical skills, such as machinery operation and quality control, alongside soft skills, including communication, leadership and problem-solving. By investing in Training and Development, SMEs can empower their workforce to become more productive, efficient and innovative (Magidi and Mahiya, 2021). Upskilled employees can contribute to streamlining processes, minimising errors and adhering to international quality standards. Furthermore, Training and Development programmes can foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement, leading to a more engaged and motivated workforce (World Bank, 2022).

Training and development helps in building a stronger workforce through employee engagement and retention**.** Investing in employees' growth through Training and Development programmes demonstrate a commitment to their well-being and career development (Ogunyami and Bruning, 2016). This fosters a more engaged and motivated workforce, leading to higher morale, improved decision-making and reduced employee turnover. Training in soft skills like communication, leadership and teamwork further strengthens collaboration and fosters a positive work environment. Moreover, equipping supervisors and managers with leadership training empowers them to effectively motivate and guide their teams (Masamba *et al.*, 2022). This training covers areas like communication, delegation, performance management and conflict resolution.

The positive impact of Training and Development extends beyond immediate performance gains. Training in occupational health and safety procedures minimises workplace accidents and injuries, leading to a healthier workforce and reduced costs associated with accidents (Masamba *et al.*, 2022). Training and Development programmes can ensure employees are aware of and compliant with labor laws, environmental regulations and other relevant legal requirements. This minimises the risk of legal issues and fines for the SME (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2023). By investing in Training and Development, developing country SMEs can create a culture of continuous learning and improvement. This empowers their workforce, fosters innovation and enhances their overall competitiveness in the global market (Magidi and Mahiya, 2021). The key lies in tailoring Training and Development programmes to the specific needs of the SME and its employees, ensuring clear learning objectives, effective delivery methods and ongoing support to maximise the long-term benefits. It's important to acknowledge that SMEs in developing countries also face significant challenges,

including limited access to finance and technology, unstable political and economic environments and a lack of skilled labour and training opportunities (Sheehan, 2014; Kajongwe *et al.*, 2021).

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Manufacturing SMEs often face significant challenges in maintaining a competitive edge and driving sustainable growth in the rapidly evolving business landscape (Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, 2020). One of the key factors that impact the performance and long-term success of these enterprises is the effectiveness of training and development programmes for their workforce (Finscope, 2022).While many manufacturing SMEs recognise the importance of investing in their employees, they often struggle to develop and implement comprehensive training strategies that align with their business objectives and address the specific skill gaps within their organisations (Kajongwe *et al.*, 2021). The lack of a systematic approach to training and development result in suboptimal employee performance, reduced productivity and missed opportunities for innovation and growth. Through addressing these challenges and creating a supportive environment, governments and development agencies can unlock the full potential of manufacturing SMEs. This can involve providing access to financing and credit facilities, simplifying regulations, investing in vocational training programmes and facilitating access to technology and innovation resources (RBZ, 2022). By empowering these small enterprises, developing countries can cultivate a robust and sustainable path to economic growth, poverty reduction and social development (Watambwa and Chilongo, 2021). The study sought to explore the effects of training and development of employees on performance of manufacturing SMEs in Mashonaland West Province Zimbabwe.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on Collaborative Learning Theory that observes how learning is an inherently social process (Hernita *et al.*, 2021). It suggests that employees learn more effectively when they engage in discussions, problem-solving and knowledge-sharing with their peers, rather than working independently. The theory is based on the idea that through collaboration, employees can develop a deeper understanding. By sharing perspectives, questioning each other and explaining concepts, employees can gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject matter. The process of collaborating, negotiating and defending one's ideas helps employees develop critical thinking, communication and problem-solving abilities. The theory observe how collaborative learning encourages active participation, as employees engage with the material and with their peers to contribute effectively to the group.

Masamba *et al. (*2024) have contended that collective learning experiences helps to build a sense of community and belonging among employees, that enhance their motivation and overall learning experience. Numerous studies have shown that collaborative learning can lead to improved performance, increased retention of knowledge and better problem-solving skills compared to traditional, individual-based learning approaches (Cammack, 2017). Also, collaborative learning requires employees to develop communication, teamwork and conflict-resolution skills that are valuable not only in academic settings but also in the workplace and broader social contexts. Kajongwe *et al. (*2022) posit that interactive and social nature of collaborative learning increases employees' motivation and engagement, as they feel a sense of shared responsibility and investment in the learning process. Overall, Collaborative Learning Theory offers a powerful approach to education that can enhance employees learning, develop essential skills and foster a more engaging and community-oriented learning environment.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The effects of training and development of employees on performance of manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe are the primary subject of this literature study. The article reviews the impact of training on various performance metrics, such as productivity, efficiency innovation financial performance, employee engagement and retention. The development of human capital is viewed as critically dependent on training. One cannot overstate the significance of investing in human capital development for the continued success of contemporary organisations (Masamba *et al*., 2022; Chundu, 2020).

Training and retraining human resources in accordance with both the near and remote operational environment is crucial for any organisation hoping to thrive in today's competitive business market (Masamba *et al*., 2022, Mashavira *et al*., 2019). Productivity rises in any company when workers get proper training. While working towards a common objective, it allows employees of SMEs to realise their own personal ambitions (Manzini *et al*., 2018; Karedza *et al*., 2017; Zindiye, 2012). It is also important to remember that a country's ability to develop its technology is directly correlated to the quantity and quality of its human resource pool. "Manpower is the basic resource, the indispensable means of correcting other resources to mankind's use and benefit," reportedly said John F. Kennedy. The success or failure of our organisations is heavily dependent on our ability to train, develop and utilise human skills. The type of nation we have will have a huge impact on how we do this. Among the many factors influencing the success of SMEs, human capital development is the most determinative (Tulekdarie *et al*, 2023; Masamba *et al*., 2022).

Investing in human capital development's impacts on SMEs' performance as investigated by Oferegbunam *et al. (*2010). Fifty business owners in the Aba SME cluster in Nigeria's south eastern region were surveyed on performance indicators such as output

quantity and quality, revenue generated and profits. Indicators of human capacity development included employees' levels of formal education, on-the-job training and attendance at seminars and trade fairs. Analysis of the sampled SMEs revealed that their performance improves significantly when they invested more in human capital development. On the other hand, Chundu (2020) found that building SMEs' human capital through on-the-job training was the most significant solution. As observed by Hughes (2015), apprenticeship programmes in the 18th century are considered the ancestors of modern human resource development (HRD). Professional trainers came to understand that their responsibilities went beyond just instructing trainees in the 1960s and 1970s (Mamatova, 2020). Many companies' shift towards employee engagement necessitated that trainers double as coaches and counsellors.

Consequently, interpersonal skills including coaching, group process facilitation and problem solving became part of the training and development (T&D) competences (Braton, 2020). Since most studies have concentrated on big companies, little is known about HRD in SMEs (Kajongwe *et al.*, 2021; Mashavira *et al.*, 2019; Karedza, 2018). Human resource development (HRD) is the subfield of HRM that is concerned with the education and improvement of employees (Chundu, 2020; Mashavira *et al.*, 2019, Armstrong *et al.*, 2014). 60% of SMEs in Zimbabwe fail during the first year of operation, another quarter fail within the first three years and the remaining 15% are highly unlikely to survive, owing to factors such as ineffective management (Badza *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this article was to address a knowledge vacuum concerning the impact of training and development initiatives on the long-term success of Small-to-Medium manufacturing enterprises (SMEs) in Mashonaland West.

It is from this poor growth rate of SMEs in Zimbabwe that the idea for studying training and development techniques in manufacturing SMEs

originated. As observed by Kajongwe *et al. (*2021), manufacturing SMEs have invested minimally in training and development due to a combination of factors such as the worsening macroeconomic situation, skills fleeing to more favourable environments, infrastructure bottlenecks and policy uncertainty and unpredictability.

Similarly, the government economic programme for Zimbabwe, National Development Strategy 1 (2021), buttressed that the Zimbabwean economy continued to collapse in both 2019 and 2020, with a -6% and a -4% decline in Gross Domestic Product forecast, respectively. Significant drops in production and manufacturing and other industries including agriculture, mining and tourism were the culprits behind the economic downturn (Mujukwa, 2019). Although this will depend on global commodity market conditions and the macro-economic, fiscal and industry governance strategies pursued by the authorities, Kajongwe *et al. (*2020) and Karedza (2018) argue that the SMEs sector could become the lead growth sector in a post-crisis economy.

The general consensus is that SMEs in the manufacturing sector may boost their performance and staff retention rates by investing in training and development programmes (Kajongwe *et al.*, 2020). An increasing body of research suggests that Human Resource Development initiatives, when implemented correctly, can influence organisational and individual performance (Bomani *et al.*, 2021; Mashavira *et al.*, 2019; Karedza, 2018). Maintaining a competitive edge and keeping up with the latest economic trends requires a company to continually invest in its human capital and skill sets so that it can create a unique set of capabilities that other businesses will struggle to replicate (Zindiye, 2020). Training and developing the workforce is good for business and employees alike, that is why human resources are considered a key factor in any successful firm. No company can afford to ignore Human Resource Development on purpose, given the

critical role that people play in the company's success and expansion. It is disheartening to see that SMEs pay little attention to Human Resource Development research, leading to a scenario where both retail and manufacturing SMEs fail to understand Human Resource Development (Manzini *et al*., 2018).

There has been insufficient focus on training and development methods as potential answers for manufacturing SMEs to achieve sustainable growth and performance. As observed by Zindiye *et al. (*2012), who studied the impact of human capital on the performance of SMEs in Harare's manufacturing sector, the manufacturing sector lacked competent managers and a sufficient number of trained workers.

Bomani *et al. (*2021), Mashavira *et al. (*2019), Karedza (2018), Manzini *et al. (*2018) and Karedza *et al.*(2017) have all addressed the performance of manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe, but it is still not clear how to apply HRD strategies in manufacturing SMEs to make the most of organisational capabilities. Human capital is essential for the efficient functioning of Small-to-Medium enterprise manufacturing businesses, even though this sector runs with limited resources (Kajongwe *et al*, 2021). As observed by Manzini *et al. (*2018), the manufacturing SMEs sector is unique in the economy and the competences and capacities of its human resource determine its correct function. To put it simply, rivals have a hard time replicating human resources (Mahadea and Rawat, 2018). To remain competitive and contribute to economic growth, owners and managers of manufacturing SMEs should employ HRD strategies that add value to their business operations. Unfortunately, this appears not to be happening. A large amount of research (Kajongwe *et al*., 2020; Mashavira *et al*., 2019; Manzini *et al*., 2018; Karedza *et al*., 2017; Sembiring, 2016) suggests that SMEs need employees with the right set of knowledge, skills and attitudes to keep up with the ever-changing business landscape.

Rabie *et al. (*2016) contend that training and development strategies for manufacturing SMEs should be comprehensive when it comes to monitoring and evaluating performance. These strategies should focus on both organisational and individual objectives so that the businesses can obtain a competitive edge, as stated by Armstrong *et al. (*2014). Manufacturing SMEs assess their tactics to acquire a competitive edge as the competitive landscape evolves (Manzini *et al.*, 2018). Karedza *et al. (*2017) assert that HRD techniques can significantly improve product quality and decrease instances of incompetence by increasing knowledge, skills, creativity and innovativeness. An individual's professional growth can be facilitated through training and development programmes that formally implement procedures for disseminating information to increase necessary knowledge, abilities, attitudes, behaviours and values (Armstrong *et al*, 2014). On the other hand, "training must be systematic in that it is specifically designed, planned and, implemented to meet defined training needs" (2014:309) states Armstrong *et al.* Improvements in the performance of SMEs in the manufacturing sector can be achieved through the implementation of training programmes that provide employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve organisational goals (Armstrong *et al.*, 2014).

Through training, SMEs can improve the capacities of their unskilled personnel (Sembiring, 2016). As an example, a study conducted by Rabie *et al. (*2016) examined the significance of training and development for Small-to-Medium enterprise (SME) owners and managers in South Africa. The results showed that of the workers in SMEs, 53.8% had received training in communication skills and 25% in technical skills. Although technical know-how is crucial, as observed by Sembiring (2016), the survey only included SME owners and managers and not employees, even though 60% of SMEs' production process relies on technology. For example, in manufacturing SMEs, systematic training is essential and it helps identify technical know-

how training courses that should cater to owners/managers and staff (Armstrong *et al.*, 2014). How HRD programmes in manufacturing SMEs meet business requirements should be demonstrated through an evaluation of systematic training (Rabie *et al*, 2016). As observed in World Bank research on poverty knowledge (2021), a lack of skill development is a key factor in keeping people in poverty.

**TRAINING TECHNIQUES**

Training strategies are the ways in which one plans to impart knowledge, abilities, perspectives and emotions to trainees (Chada *et al.*, 2020). The effectiveness of training relies heavily on these training strategies. Whether these methods are used for training on the job or not is a common way to classify them. Workers with lower levels of expertise can benefit greatly from on-the-job training (SHRM, 2016). Trainees get plenty of hands-on experience with real tools and machinery in a real-world setting. Millions of unskilled African men were trained to execute a variety of duties in various war facilities using this training technique that gained acceptance during the Second World War In contrast, off-the-job training methods are often those used in training schools, where competent trainees receive knowledge via classroom instruction, seminars, conferences, panel discussions and computer-assisted instruction. Induction, apprenticeship and supervisory training are three common forms of on-the-job training that employees may participate in (David, Nicholas and Fred, 2006).

Here are some other training methods suggested by Armstrong (2014). Technical skills training: SMEs can provide training on technical skills such as computer literacy, accounting, marketing and customer service. This can help employees to perform their tasks more efficiently and effectively.

Leadership and management training: SMEs can provide training on leadership and management skills for their managers and supervisors.

This can help them to better manage their teams and improve overall performance. Soft skills training: SMEs can provide training on soft skills such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving. These skills are essential for employees to work effectively together and contribute to a positive work environment (Armstrong, 2014). On-the-job training: SMEs can provide on-the-job training to employees to help them learn new skills and gain practical experience. This can help employees to develop their skills while also contributing to the overall success of the business. Mentorship and coaching: SMEs can provide mentorship and coaching programmes to employees to help them develop their skills and knowledge. This can be particularly beneficial for new employees or those transitioning to new roles (Chada *et al*, 2022; Sembiring, 2016).

When trying to gauge the efficiency of a Small-to-Medium-sized business, financial performance indicators are often preferred non-financial ones. The most popular measures of financial productivity include sales growth, operating income, cash flow and net profit margin. Commonly used are non-financial metrics that focus on the client. All three of these factors contribute to consumer contentment: preference, repeat business and productivity (Chada *et al*, 2022). Very little study has looked at how SMEs measure performance in the past. A performance assessment system that included both financial and non-financial characteristics was established by 79% of the 160 SMEs in Malaysia, as observed by Ahmad (2020). In addition, 76% of SMEs prioritise operational income, 75% sales growth, 74% cash flow and 74% return on investment when analysing financial performance (Ahmad, 2020).

More than any other non-monetary metric, customer complaint volume (77%) and prompt delivery (73%) were considered important. Aside from financial indicators, non-financial metrics were commonly utilised by Malaysian SMEs. These included staff turnover (75%),

defect rate and absenteeism (74%), customer satisfaction surveys (73%) and warranty claims (73%). The least common non-financial metrics were profitability analysis (used by 60% of selected SMEs) and stock control modelling (59% of SMEs). Research done by Ahmad in 2020 in Malaysia might not be relevant to SMEs in Zimbabwe's manufacturing sector. Nonetheless, this study will use performance metrics such as ROI, ROA, service quality and impact on performance models of manufacturing Small-to-Medium enterprises (SMEs) in Mashonaland West Province.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was guided by Pragmatism research Philosophy. Two staged sampling approach was used, both probability and nonprobability. Structured questionnaires and structured interview guides were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from sample size of 80 respondents derived from a population of 100 registered SMEs. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlations while qualitative data were analysed using NVivo. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability was used in this study to test validity and reliability of data instruments. The researchers observe ethics at each and every stage of conducting this study.

## FINDINGS

The questionnaires were completed for 68 respondents selected in this study constituting 85% response rate. Saturation for interviews was reached at 14 participants. The objective of the study was to explore the effects of training and development of employees on performance of manufacturing SMEs in Mashonaland West Province Zimbabwe.

### DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

In this study, we utilised descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, to present a comprehensive overview of the

sample data. The data were collected using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." In examining the mean score values and standard deviation (SD) values, we gained insights into both the level of agreement among respondents and the variability in their responses.

### TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Through the use of training and development-specific questions, the study investigated how SMEs in the manufacturing sector progressed after receiving training and development. After the data were analysed, Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation.

**Table 1** Training and development descriptive statistics

| Items | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Transfer relationships and strategic direction of the organisation | 4.354 | 0.587 |
| Enhances employee's performance | 4.697 | 0.543 |
| Increased job satisfaction and employee engagement | 4.557 | 0.672 |
| Increased employee motivation | 4.701 | 0.576 |
| Improved knowledge equals increased profit. | 4.662 | 0.604 |
| Improved employee skills | 4.580 | 0.675 |
| Recognises efforts and results | 4.592 | 0.668 |
| Promotes better succession planning | 4.653 | 0.607 |

The descriptive statistics for the variable "training and development," illustrated by mean and standard deviation, are presented in Table 1. The measures evaluating training and development were widely agreed upon by respondents, as indicated by the mean scores ranging from 4.354 to 4.701. Furthermore, there appears to be minimal answer variability indicated by the low SD values (range from 0.597 to 0.688), that observe how individuals consistently agree. The little diversity in the SD values and the great consensus among participants about training and development are supported by these data. Participants'

broad agreement on the favourable impact of training and development programmes in various important areas within manufacturing SMEs is obvious.

First, they recognised the importance of these programmes in fostering knowledge transfer, networking and organisational alignment with strategic goals, that in turn leads to a more productive and cohesive staff as supported by Kajongwe *et al. (*2021). Second, the numbers show that investing in staff via training and development pays dividends in the form of increased productivity and contentment in the workplace. Participating in activities that enhance one's skills provides workers a sense of purpose and progression that increases their dedication to the company.

Training and development programmes also lead to more motivated workers, that in turn creates a more positive work atmosphere where everyone feels appreciated and encouraged to do their best. In addition, the participants acknowledged that manufacturing SMEs can enhance their profitability through investing in training and development programmes that raise staff knowledge and expertise. Consistent with the recommendations by Chada *et al. (*2020), maintaining competitiveness and efficiently adapting to market needs is made possible by equipping the staff with up-to-date skills and knowledge. Another important takeaway from the study is the significance of training and development programmes in rewarding workers for their hard work. This kind of acknowledgment is critical for maintaining high morale and productivity in the workplace and for creating an environment where employees feel valued and appreciated.

Finally, training and development are crucial in helping manufacturing SMEs improve their succession planning. The organisation can keep running smoothly through leadership changes

and manpower shortages by investing in its people and creating a pipeline of talented people (Tulekdarie *et al*, 2023). Figure 1 shows that training and development has many positive effects on manufacturing Small-to-Medium enterprises. Several facets of SMEs performance in Zimbabwe's manufacturing sector can be improved through training and development. These include staff motivation, adaptability, efficiency and customer service quality. Thematic word clouds representing qualitative findings in the same field are shown in Figure 2.


**Figure 2:** Effects of training and development on SME Performance in the manufacturing sector of Mashonaland West Province Zimbabwe **(**Masamba *et al.,* 2024)

Learning efficiency and error reduction, performance improvement and motivation, productivity, morale and rapport, enhanced work performance and employee motivation, skill improvement, sales and succession planning, motivation through learning and skill

improvement, strategic adaptability and resilience, recognition, results and skill enhancement, labour turnover reduction and increased efficiency, retention of top talents, job satisfaction and morale, versatile workforce and customer service, change management and employee involvement and productivity and customer service excellence were the developed themes. This also validates facts provided by literature. The influence of training on SMEs performance can be quantified in terms of people, work and power even though the financial return from training is typically difficult to predict. Milhem *et al. (*2020) are of the view that a thorough evaluation of training outcomes also considers learner reactions, its influence on the workplace, operational and financial results and its perceived value in helping people make changes. Although most academics believe that training helps SMEs expansion and improves profitability, productivity and competitive advantage, SMEs don't appear to have been recognised training as a factor that increases their performance (Yahya, Othman and Shamsuri, 2019).

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

The study aimed to evaluate the performance management indicators used by manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe's Mashonaland West Province. It did this by asking participants to rate and comment on these indicators. Table 2 displays the summary statistics, including mean and SD, derived from the data analysis.

**Table 2:** Performance management descriptive statistics

| Items | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Innovativeness | 4.494 | 0.605 |
| Return on Asset | 4.675 | 0.606 |
| Return on Equity | 4.599 | 0.648 |
| Return on Investment | 4.608 | 0.656 |
| Quality service delivery | 4.561 | 0.686 |
| Product lead time | 4.650 | 0.633 |

When looking at the descriptive statistics for the variable "performance management," that is measured using mean and standard deviation, Table 2 provides a comprehensive summary. With mean values ranging from 4.494 to 4.675, this variable shows that respondents in Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe, largely agreed with the items used to measure performance management indicators in SMEs. With SD values between 0.605 and 0.686, there is little room for interpretation, indicating that all respondents were in agreement. As seen by the mean scores and limited variability represented by the SD values, these results reveal a high consensus among participants about the performance management indicators utilised in SMEs. Table 2 shows that when it comes to the adoption of certain Performance Management metrics, employees of manufacturing SMEs are in complete accord. Notably, among these businesses, the most notable metrics are innovativeness, ROA, ROE and ROI and quality service delivery and product lead time.

It appears that SMEs understand the need of innovation for growth and industry competitiveness, since Innovativeness is a crucial performance management metric for many of them. These companies can respond quickly to shifts in consumer tastes, seize emerging opportunities and overcome obstacles because they place a premium on innovation. Important financial measures that SMEs prioritise for measuring financial performance and assessing efficiency and profitability include Return on Asset (ROA), Return on Equity (ROE) and Return on Investment (ROI). By keeping a careful eye on these metrics, SMEs may make smart choices, use their resources wisely and increase their profits (Finscope, 2022). Consistent with the recommendations by Watambwa and Chilongo (2021), one key component of performance management for SMEs is ensuring quality service delivery. This shows that they are dedicated to not just meeting but also beyond client expectations. Businesses can improve their brand's reputation, client loyalty and word-of-mouth if they concentrate on providing high-quality products or services.

Product lead time is a key performance management metric that SMEs may use to improve their operational processes and be more efficient (Magidi and Mahiya). By cutting product lead time, these companies can meet customer expectations faster, save money on production and beat out the competition by getting their products to market faster. Figure 2 shows that many performance management metrics are highly valued by SMEs' staff, indicating a dedication to innovation, financial success, service excellence and operational effectiveness. Taken as a whole, these metrics demonstrate the SMEs' commitment to long-term success in their fields and lend credence to their expansion plans. Nonetheless, when it comes to performance management metrics for Zimbabwe's manufacturing SMEs, the qualitative findings corroborate the quantitative findings. After asking SMEs about performance management indicators, many themes emerged, including product lead time and quality service delivery, ROI and return on investment, customer-related indicators, efficiency and speed, employee performance, financial metrics, sales performance, market share and growth and performance management indicators.

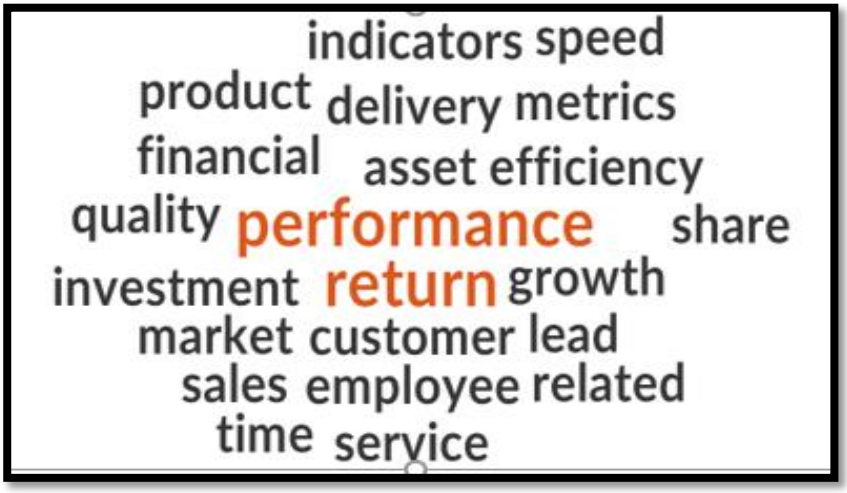


**Figure 2:** Performance management indicators in SMEs **(**Masamba *et al.,* 2024)

The findings of this study are in line with previous research that has shown that performance management indicators might reveal an entity's trajectory towards growth (Gowan, 2019; Paul and Moser, 2019; Wanberg, 2020).

**SAMPLE ADEQUACY TESTS**

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity (BTS) were used as statistical tools to evaluate the data's suitability for factor analysis and the sample's appropriateness. To better understand the data set and its suitability for further analysis, researchers run these tests. This is especially true when trying to uncover hidden dimensions or components within the variables of interest. To derive meaningful inferences from the data and to ensure that the subsequent factor analysis is conducted on a firm foundation, these statistical assessments were necessary (Table 3)

| **Table 3:** Training and Development | | |
|---|---|---|
| KMO | | 0.823 |
| BTS | Approx. Chi-Square | 642.320 |
| | Df | 28 |
| | Sig. | 0.000 |
| **SMEs Performance** | | |
| KMO | | 0.766 |
| BTS | Approx. Chi-Square | 410.167 |
| | Df | 15 |
| | Sig. | 0.000 |

Table 3 further shows that the inter-correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, as confirmed by the significant p-values (Sig. = 0.000) in the Bartlett's test of sphericity (BTS). This result provides more evidence that the data are suitable for component analysis by confirming the existence of linear combinations and sufficient correlation among variables. Table 3's findings point to a significant association between the variables, suggesting that SEM and

factorability analyses are good fits for the correlation matrix (Rogers, 1995).

### SCALE RELIABILITY TEST

Testing the internal consistency of scale items is what a reliability test is all about. To put it simply, it checks if the measurement items can reliably yield the same findings when given again (Rogers, 1995). The constructs in this study are measured using different scales, all of which are tested for reliability using the scale reliability procedure. Failed tests raise the possibility that respondents were confused or misunderstood about the items, that in turn led to erroneous measuring scales.

### TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

A thorough examination of this crucial feature is achieved by using eight separate items to examine the characteristics of training and development. Each of these eight indicators underwent a thorough reliability examination to guarantee the measurement's robustness. Table 4 presents the results of this research in great detail, providing a synopsis of the data relevant to the development and training aspects.

**Table 4:** Reliability results for Training and development

| **Cronbach's Alpha** | **Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items** | | **N of Items** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.954 | 0.954 | | 7 | | |
| **Item-Total Statistics** | | | | | |
| | **Scale Mean if Item Deleted** | **Scale Variance if Item Deleted** | **Corrected Item-Total Correlation** | **Squared Multiple Correlation** | **Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted** |
| Enhances employees' performance | 23.061 | 35.738 | 0.781 | 0.620 | 0.951 |
| Increased job satisfaction and employee | 23.099 | 34.255 | 0.838 | 0.732 | 0.946 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| engagement | | | | | |
| Increased employee motivation | 22.990 | 34.195 | 0.841 | 0.720 | 0.946 |
| Improved knowledge equals increased profit. | 23.099 | 34.664 | 0.840 | 0.725 | 0.946 |
| Improved employee skills | 23.057 | 33.109 | 0.865 | 0.758 | 0.944 |
| Recognises efforts and results | 23.038 | 33.826 | 0.869 | 0.772 | 0.944 |
| Promotes better succession planning | 23.026 | 33.967 | 0.850 | 0.738 | 0.945 |

The results showed an impressive Cronbach's alpha of 0.954 that remained unchanged even after removing one item. This not only shows a high level of internal consistency, but it also exceeds the required criterion of 0.70. Consistently surpassing the acceptable threshold of 0.30, the corrected item-total correlations (ranging from 0.781 to 0.869) indicate that these items proficiently measure the same construct, in line with Pallant's (2016) findings. Additional strong evidence for the construct's validity is provided by the squared multiple correlations, that range from 0.620 to 0.772.

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

The Performance Management construct, that includes six separate components, was subjected to a comprehensive reliability analysis. Table 1.6 displays the exhaustive results of this reliability evaluation that provide a thorough understanding of the Performance Management dimension's robustness and dependability.

**Table 5:** Reliability results for Performance Management

| Cronbach's Alpha | | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | | N of Items | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.926 | | 0.926 | | 6 | |
| **Item-Total Statistics** | | | | | |
| | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Squared Multiple Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
| Innovativeness | 19.6783 | 18.289 | .781 | .665 | .913 |
| Return on Asset | 19.6943 | 19.203 | .786 | .639 | .913 |
| Return on Equity | 19.6369 | 18.475 | .796 | .645 | .911 |
| Return on Investment | 19.7420 | 19.304 | .761 | .599 | .916 |
| Quality service delivery | 19.5796 | 18.110 | .814 | .696 | .909 |
| Product lead time | 19.7420 | 18.588 | .780 | .654 | .913 |

Each item significantly contributed to the total Cronbach's alpha value of 0.926, as seen in Table 1.6 that displays the item-total data. All of the individual items' corrected item-total correlations were higher the acceptable threshold of 0.300, ranging from 0.761 to 0.814. This finding is consistent with Pallant's (2016) observations and highlights how these items effectively measure a shared construct. Additional strong evidence supporting the construct's validity was provided by the items' squared multiple correlations which ranged from 0.599 to 0.696.

**Table 6:** SEM path coefficients.

| Hypothesis | Relationship | Coefficient | SE | T statistic | P-values | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H3 | TD --> PF | 0.380 | 0.081 | 4.691 | <0.000 | Supported |

Likewise, the analysis uncovered a strong correlation between training and development (TD) and the performance (PF) of SMEs in Zimbabwe's Mashonaland West Province manufacturing industry. The association between training and development and the performance outcomes of manufacturing SMEs is supported by a strong path coefficient ($\beta = 0.380$, $t = 4.961$, $p < 0.001$), indicating the influential role of training and development in shaping these results. Therefore, the results clearly support the idea of prioritising and strengthening training and development programmes as a promising approach to improving the overall performance of SMEs in Zimbabwe's ever-changing manufacturing industry.

## DISCUSSION

Inference to literature, the impact of training and development on the performance of manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe is profound. Magidi and Mahiya (2021) argue that continuous support from both the government and private sector is essential to create a sustainable training framework that benefits SMEs in the long run through investing in their employees' skills and knowledge, these businesses can improve productivity, enhance employee satisfaction and gain a competitive advantage in the market. Furthermore, Chundu (2022) also supports from the results that a well-trained workforce provides a manufacturing SME a competitive edge in the market. By investing in employee development, businesses can differentiate themselves from competitors and attract and retain top talent.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Training and development initiatives enhance employee motivation, creating a work atmosphere that promotes support, appreciation and a

drive to thrive in their positions. RBZ (2022) observe how allocating resources towards training and development initiatives results in enhanced knowledge and expertise among employees, ultimately resulting in heightened profitability for Small-to-Medium enterprises. Providing employees with current skills and knowledge allows the organisation to stay competitive and successfully respond to market needs. The study recommends that SMEs should cultivate entrepreneurial and business management abilities. By offering training and development programmes that focus on essential skills for managers and owners, including strategic planning, financial management, human resources management and leadership. Acquiring these abilities would empower manufacturing SMEs to make well-informed decisions, efficiently allocate resources and successfully adjust to evolving market conditions (Masamba *et al*, 2022). These recommendations will focus on leveraging training and development as a strategic tool to achieve sustainable growth, improved competitiveness and long-term success.

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