THE IMPACT OF INNOVATIVE PLANNING ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN SELECTED AGRO-STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES UNDER TURBULENT TIMES IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract
This study examines the impact of innovative planning as a possible solution to the problem of low employee engagement (EE) in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) within Zimbabwe's agricultural sector, particularly in a turbulent business environment. The study selected three SOEs from this sector, which are the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), the Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board (TIMB) and the Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA). The Social Exchange Theory and the Chaos Theory guide the study and mixed methods of collecting and analysing data were utilised in this research. The research sample comprised 15 executives, selected using purposive sampling technique, as key informants for the qualitative data. The sample size for the survey was 245 employees, obtained after using Yamane's formula, resulting in an impressive 86% response rate. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 for Windows was used to analyse the data. The study concludes that innovative planning has a positive impact on employee engagement during times of turbulence. The study recommends using the organisation's strategy in goal setting, setting goal deadlines, communicating clear performance objectives, linking up unit and employee goals to organisational objectives, involving employees in setting goals and using job descriptions when setting goals.

Keywords: goal, job description, performance, strategy, reciprocity, turbulence

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
Employee engagement has emerged as a crucial factor influencing organisational performance and success (Patel, 2023; Deepalakshmi *et al.,*

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2024). According to Patel (2023), an engaged employee is one who is fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about their work and therefore takes positive action to further the interests and reputation of an organisation. In Zimbabwe, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) are major drivers of the economy, hence their survival is fundamental to the national economy because they have potential to significantly contribute to the country's Gross Domestic Product (Muzapu *et al.,* 2023), thus driving the achievement of Vision 2030. However, these SOEs have suffered from low employee engagement over the years as indicated by high labour turnover, strikes and labour disputes (Wushe and Shenje, 2019). Specifically, in the selected cases, EE in GMB was 33%, TIMB was 29% and in AMA it was 36% during the period the data were collected. In addition, the selected SOEs are also operating in a turbulent business environment which makes it more difficult for organisations to engage their employees (Deo, 2018), rendering current planning mechanisms ineffective in addressing the problem of low employee engagement. A turbulent business environment is defined by Hubbard and Rogers (2019) as the continuous changes in environmental factors which influence the operations and performance of firms. Examples of parameters that depict a turbulent environment include staff rationalisation, leadership changeover, labour disputes, adoption of new technology, introduction of new systems such as the Result Based Management System, introduction of new products and penetration of new markets.

This instability in the business environment may threaten the country's quest to achieve vision 2030, hence the need for a solution to solve engagement problems in SOEs in the Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. The prospects for SOEs in agriculture to drive the achievement of Vision 2030 are anchored on the engagement of its employees to deliver in a turbulent environment (Kidane and Xuefeng, 2021). This study argues that innovative planning fosters EE in SOEs in the agricultural sector, within a turbulent business environment. The aim of this research is, therefore, to examine the impact of innovative planning on EE in SOEs in agricultural sector. The research is guided by the following research question: How can SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector practise innovative planning to drive employee engagement in a turbulent business environment? The hypothesis that guides the study is "Innovative Planning positively impacts employee engagement in SOEs within Zimbabwe's agricultural sector."

CONCEPT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The concept of EE is appreciated globally because most organisations are facing problems in trying to embrace the turbulent business environment (Deo, 2018). To remain competitive in the market, organisations engage employees as a strategic tool to attain a competitive advantage for the organisations (Govender and Bussin, 2020). Over the years, EE has become one of the key topics among researches and in the management of people because of the much-anticipated benefits that come with implementing it in organisations (Hoole and Bonnema, 2015; Martin, 2020; Albro and McElfresh, 2021; Patel, 2023; Deepalakshmi *et al.,* 2024). The concept of EE has become popular due to its impact on organisational performance outcomes (Mansor *et al.,* 2023). Because people are critical assets of an organisation (Faugoo, 2024), it is important that organisations seek ways that enhance engagement.

Despite the prominence of the topic, there is still no one clear and agreed definition of engagement among researchers and practitioners. EE was described as a situation whereby people's cognitive, emotional and physical selves are brought to the place of work (Huang *et al.*, 2022). EE can be seen as a combination of commitment to the organisation and its values plus a willingness to assist colleagues and it is viewed by many companies as a step higher than motivation or satisfaction at work (Martin, 2020). Similar to how companies define EE, research institutes and consultancies also define EE as a psychological state in the employee that manifest in numerous positive performance outcomes for the organisation (Mansor *et al.*, 2023). The research concludes that EE is defined as a reciprocal permanent positive feeling and attachment to a job that initiate organisational performance actions, hence this study adopted this definition.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

THE SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) has gained prominence as the widely used theory in the EE studies (Shuck *et al.,* 2014). This study used the SET as the basis for developing the study's research framework because it provided a theoretical basis for explaining the relationship between EE and improved performance of employees in SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. When employees are convinced that their organisation cares about their engagement, they respond by attempting to discharge their obligation to the organisation by fulfilling the organisation's expectations (Shuck et al.,2014). In other words, if SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector make an effort to engage their employees by implementing Innovative Planning, the organisation's objectives will be achieved. Thus, this study seeks to discover specific innovative ways of planning in an effort to foster EE in SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector.

THE CHAOS THEORY

According to Narh *et al.* (2016), the Chaos Theory explains a systems behaviour that is complex, irregular and unpredictable, that is not random but manifest in hidden order. Raisio and Lundström (2015) highlight that chaos causes wicked problems in managing organisations. This theory guides research studies where turbulence define the phenomenon under study. This research investigates the concept of managing planning in a turbulent environment, justifying the use of the Chaos Theory to frame arguments relating to organisations experiencing turbulence. Therefore, the theory helps to frame this study's foundational underpinning of the disorder brought on by turbulence in organisations and structures that innovative planning strategies in such an environment can help minimise the effects, hence fostering an engaged workforce.

TURBULENT OR VOLATILE, UNCERTAIN, COMPLEX AND AMBIGUOUS ENVIRONMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON Employee Engagement

Turbulent environments are regarded as disruptive, fast changing and demand novel approaches to strategy that involve less planning and control, flexibility, learning and improvisation (Vera and Crossan, 2005; Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998; Bettis and Hitt, 1995). This environment is often referred to as a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA); hence the words can be used interchangeably. Today's organisations operate in an environment characterised by turbulence and dynamism, which greatly affects business activities (Hubbard and Rogers, 2019). The VUCA world puts a lot of negative pressure on the organisation. It, therefore, completely alters the way an organisation reacts to changes in the external environment. According to Deo (2018), a VUCA environment produces organisational challenges due to its conflicting and dramatic changes. When organisations try to survive and perform in periods of VUCA, they keep on altering their goals, procedures and policies which affects EE. People become unclear about what is expected from them in the ever-evolving world. EE dips because the employee is confused and more concerned about his/her survival than giving his/her best to the organisation. According to Deo *(ibid.).,* VUCA environments present challenges to human capital managers by jeopardising their engagement initiatives. SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector experience a lot of turbulent situations which include staff rationalisation, leadership changeover, labour disputes, adoption of new technology, introduction of new systems such as the Result Based Management System, introduction of new products and penetration of new markets.

Innovative planning can be used as a shield to minimise the effect of turbulence on the organisation. Hence, innovative planning fosters stable and positive EE which also aids in the success of organisations. This researcher believes that managing planning becomes critical in such an environment, but at the same time, the process should be innovative and drive EE. This study hence unpacks how these innovative planning constructs can be intertwined to survive in such an environment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Chowhan *et al.* (2024), planning encompasses setting performance expectations for individuals and groups that align with the accomplishment of organisational goals. The significance of planning employee's performance includes establishing standards and elements of their performance appraisal plans (Rusu *et al.,* 2016). According to Robbins and Coulter (2020), planning is an analytical process that breaks down a set of intentions or goals into formal steps that can be implemented automatically and articulating the anticipated results. Planning is a process of defining the goals of an organisation and determining the resources and time needed to complete those goals (Aguinis, 2019). It is a tool that is used to encourage understanding and commitment by linking the employee's work with the organisation's objectives (Aguinis and Burgi-Tian, 2021).

According to Aguinis and Burgi-Tian (2023), "innovative planning blends strategic foresight with experimentation to drive adaptability and growth in complex environments". The following literature unpacks extraordinary ways of practising planning for it to be regarded as innovative. Planning should not be the core of managers only (Mintzberg, 1994; Senge, 2006; Aguinis and Burgi-Tian, 2023). The process must involve mployees as this assists them in understanding the goals of the organisation, what needs to be done, the reason for doing it and how best it should be done (Locke and Latham 1990). Pukalos *et al.* (2015) postulate that to if employees are in involved in setting goals, planning will be enhanced. This is because employees are motivated and encouraged them to be accountable for work responsibilities and assignments (Aguinis, 2023). It is also important to ensure that work is planned out in advance for effective results.

According to Aguinis *(ibid.).*, the performance elements and standards established during planning should be specific, measurable, achievable and reliable and time bound (SMART). Aguinis *(ibid.).* argues that when a system is specific, it provides concrete and detailed guidance to employees about what is expected from them and ways through which they can achieve these expectations. Goals also need to be achievable, implying that they should be attainable and perceived as fair to the employees who are supposed to attain them. Locke and Latham (1990) postulate that goals work best when they are meaningful and challenging to the individual. Pukalos *et al.* (2019) assert that, while goals and expected results can be established for the entire rating cycle, many employees are in jobs that are characterised by continual change. A turbulent business environment may suggest that jobs in SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector are susceptible to continuous changes. Under these circumstances, it may be necessary to set nearer-term goals whilst ensuring that they are sufficiently specific and achievable, hence providing focus, adaptability and positive motivating effects (Berchicci and Tarakci, 2022).

Pukalos *et al.* (2023) also highlight that SMART goals also have challenges. These include rapid changes of today's environment, the issue of long, time horizons and the issue that specific goals reduce ambiguity and are less useful in making distinctions among individuals. In that regard, Pukalos *et al. (ibid.).* suggested setting goals innovatively and differently by recommending that managers and employees collaborate in setting about five performance goals which clearly relate to the organisation's priorities. They also emphasized that goals need to be brief and include only the most important results the employee is expected to achieve. Pukalos (2023) notes that goals should be very difficult but attainable goals for more effective performance outcomes instead of setting moderately difficult goals. Time frame was also identified as important when setting goals, for example, when goals are set quarterly, it can be a good thumb rule because three months is enough time to accomplish a significant result. In addition, setting goals that can be achieved or revised each quarter is not onerous if the process is streamlined.

It is, however crucial to note that while some jobs lend themselves to quantitative metrics, other jobs can also be measured subjectively (Pukalos *et al.,* 2023). According to Pukalos *et al.* (2023), linking goals and rewards is also imperative during the performance planning process. For example, for jobs in which results are easily quantifiable and under the employee's direct control, rewards directly tied to goals can work well *(ibid.).* However, for more complex jobs in which results are difficult to quantify or in circumstances outside the employee's control, the extent to which goal attainment is tied to rewards should remain a judgment call. Managers should also consider incentivising the extent to which the team or employee takes on challenging but achievable goals and makes positive progress towards achieving them, rather than goal attainment per se, as the former will lead to higher performance *(ibid.).*

When planning goals, it is important to consider an employee's job description as the foundation for setting goals (Aguinis, 2019). Job descriptions are useful in highlighting specific characteristics of a certain job that an employee has to perform. Objectives need to be challenging, that is neither too easy nor too hard for them to motivate (Locke and Latham, 1990). Pukalos *et al.* (2019) echoed similar sentiments by arguing that, during the planning session, the appraisee and the appraisal officer should agree on the list of objectives or the key result areas that the employee should achieve. It is also important to ensure that goals to be achieved by employees are aligned to the organisation's strategy (Aguinis, 2023). Similar sentiments were echoed by Almayali *et al.* (2023), where strategic congruence was proposed when setting goals.

Pukalos *et al.* (2019) argue that the planning process creates an environment in which the performance of employees would be measured against the set standards for evaluation. This suggests that employees need to grasp fully what is expected of them for a possibility of a better outcome. Snell and Bohlander. (2013) highlight that effective performance management is measured by the extent to which employees know what the organisation is trying to achieve and what is expected from them. The common lesson that needs to be learned is that people believe in doing things that they find important to do and that they believe in. They are likely to perform if they have accepted the goals and vice versa. According to Pukalos *et al.* (2015), employees need to be made aware of the results that they will receive if they accomplish the set goals to promote increase in results and behaviour related to their performance expectations. In other words, it means that employees must be motivated to achieve expectations and behave accordingly. Cardy and Leonard (2014) are also of the same view that employees need to be motivated. They propose that organisations may use the Goal Setting Theory whose essence is to set a performance goal. They further suggest the Expectancy Theory by Vroom, which examines motivation at the level of effort an employee chooses to place on a task. (Rhee and Mehra, 2006). In the same line of thought, Pukalos *et al.* (2019) put forward that lack of connectivity between performance management systems and organisational strategy lead to failures to achieve organisational goals.

From the synthesis of the literature, it can be concluded that innovative planning involves aligning what needs to be done and the way it should be done. Goal-setting should involve breaking down organisational goals into departmental and individual goals (Aguinis, 2019). This suggests that the employees' performance scorecards in SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector must be aligned with the divisional and organisational objectives at this stage. Pukalos *et al.* (2023) postulate that innovatively setting performance goals typically entails linking up goals instead of the traditional way of cascading goals. This entails allowing each unit and employee set their own goals by "linking up" to the organisation's objectives. The process avoids having to wait for each level above to complete its cascade and each team and individual can set goals simultaneously (Pukalos *et al.,* 2023). This approach is faster and it allows for a more direct line of sight between an individual's goals and the organisation's objectives. Moreover, it typically results in clearer and more meaningful goals, that is useful within more complex organisational structures.

The employee's development needs should also be considered in the goal-setting process as this increases motivation and reduces turnover (Gallup, 2022). Development goals can be used for either improving current job performance or preparing for career advancement (Aguinis, 2019). For planning to be effective, there is need for a formal development plan for employees that should be based on requisite knowledge, skills and behaviours and key competencies required to achieve the set targets (Pukalos *et al.,* 2019). The common themes coming out of the preceding literature is defining the end results to be accomplished, prioritising involvement of employees in the goal setting process. Managers are also encouraged to communicate and help employees in attaining their goals by providing guidance and resources. The other key themes coming out include linking individual goals to organisational success, using job descriptions as the basis for setting goals and setting difficult goals, short-term goals but achievable. If SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector adopt the innovative ways of planning as reviewed in the foregoing literature, it could assist in fostering EE during turbulent times. In view of the theoretical and empirical arguments in respect of this construct and in terms of its indicators, this study theorises that:

$H_{1:}$ Innovative planning positively impacts employee engagement in SOEs that are in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the mixed methods of collecting and analysing data. The primary data for this study was gathered through questionnaires and interview guides. The reliability of the research instruments was measured. Both questionnaires and interview guides were selected for this study due to their compatibility with the research purpose for this study which was explanatory, descriptive and exploratory. The questionnaire and interview guide were both useful to address the complementary nature of the mixed methods adopted for this study.

The research sample comprised a total of 15 managers and executives who were the key informants for the qualitative data. These were selected using purposive sampling technique. For the quantitative study, the study's target population consisted of all employees permanently working in the three selected SOEs within Zimbabwe' agricultural sector; that is, GMB, TIMB and AMA and there was a total of 633 during the time the study was conducted. The sample size for the survey was 245 permanent employees, obtained after using Yamane's formula of sample size determination, resulting in an impressive 86% response rate. The sampling techniques used to select the actual respondents for the survey were stratified representative sampling and simple random sampling. The samples to be drawn from each of the three SOEs were proportionately determined as illustrated below.

GMB proportion of respondents: n=$\frac{456}{633}$x245 = 176 employees

TIMB proportion of respondents: n=$\frac{141}{633}$x245 = 55 employees

AMA proportion of respondents: n=$\frac{36}{633}$x245 = 14 employees

As indicated above, the total number of permanent entry and mid-level employees drawn from each of the three SOEs were calculated as above. To determine the distribution or proportion of employees drawn from each region, city or office for the selected SOEs, further proportional or representative sampling was done as indicated in the tables below. GMB employees were sampled according to regions because of its big size in terms of the span of its operations and all the data were available from its Human Resources Department. That was meant to easily obtain information and ensure that every employee is represented. Table 1 shows the proportion of GMB employees sampled by region.

Table 1: Distribution of the GMB Sample of Respondents by Region

Region	**Respondents (Permanent Entry and Mid-Level employees)**	**Total (n)**
Northern	179	69
Southern	79	30
Eastern	100	39
Head office	98	38
Sample (n)	456	176

Table 2: Distribution of the TIMB Sample of Respondents by City/town offices

Region	**Respondents (Permanent Entry and Mid-level employees)**	**Total (n)**
Harare	84	33
Chinhoyi	13	5
Karoi	3	1
Bindura	5	2
Mvurwi	7	3
Marondera	11	4

Rusape	4	2
Mutare	14	5
Sample (n)	141	55

Table 2 indicates the proportion of TIMB employees drawn from each city or town. TIMB has 8 offices nation-wide distributed across each city or town. Employees from all offices/ cities were included to ensure their views were represented.

Table 3: Distribution of the AMA Sample of Respondents by Region

Region	Respondents (Permanent Entry and Mid-level employees)	Total (n)
Head Office	18	7
Chinhoyi	3	1
Bulawayo	3	1
Marondera	3	1
Beitbridge	2	1
Chirundu	2	1
Bindura	2	1
Masvingo	3	1
Sample (n)	36	14

Table 3 indicates the proportion of AMA employees drawn from each city or town. AMA has eight offices nation-wide distributed across each city or town. Employees from all offices were included to ensure their views were presented.

After determining the representative sample size for each SOE and the respondents to be drawn from each region, office or city, the study then applied simple random technique to select the participants from each office. A unique employment number known as EC number for each employee from each of the SOEs was obtained from the Human Resources Department payroll. The EC numbers for the regions /offices for each SOE was then printed and individually cut out and placed in boxes. The sample size required for each region/office was then selected randomly from each box. The sample was then compiled into one long list for each SOE. The list of the sample size was presented to the Human Resources Managers to provide email contact details. The collected data were then compiled to form a data set which was using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 for Windows.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

Two hundred and twenty-five (225) questionnaires were collected from the respondents and after carefully scrutinising the returned questionnaires, 14 questionnaires were found to be spoiled and incomplete. These spoiled and incomplete questionnaires were discarded and 211 completed questionnaires formed the final data set that was captured and analysed constituting a response rate of 86 %.

RELIABILITY TESTS

A variable is reliable if the Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the variable is 0.7 or better (Dawadi et al., 2021). Using that guiding principle, innovative planning recorded 0.947 (n = 6), showing that the instrument was reliable for the study.

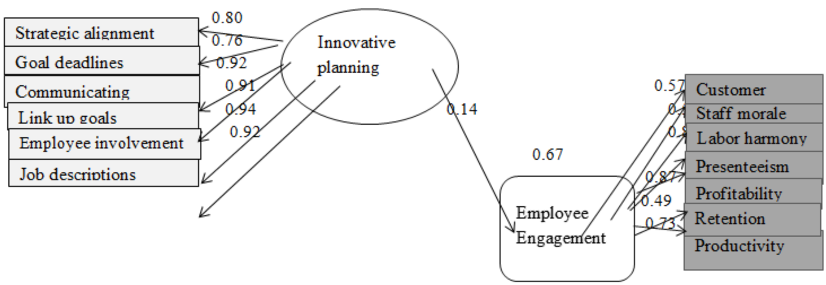

Figure 1: Structural Equation Model

As evident from the structural model or path diagram presented in Figure 1, innovative planning positively impacts EE.

Table 4: Significance levels for the path associations

			Estimate (SFL)	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Engagement	<---	Innovative Planning	.144	.037	1.007	***	Supported

The results of path associations of innovative planning shown in Table 4 were used to accept or reject the study's hypothesis. The p-value of the hypothesis was below 0.05. The hypothesis was supported by empirical findings as discussed below.
Hypothesis H_1: Innovative planning positively impacts employee engagement in SOEs that are in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector.

The objective was structured to examine the impact of innovative planning on EE in a turbulent environment for SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. As evident from the Significance levels for path associations presented in Table 4, that shows standardised factor loadings (SFL) and p-values, innovative planning had a positive and significant impact on EE in SOEs that are in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector (SFL = .144, p = .000). This means that Hypothesis H1 was confirmed. Pukalos (2023) also found similar results and these results are also supported by the Social Exchange Theory which argues that when employees are convinced that their organisation cares about their engagement, they reciprocate by discharging their obligation to the organisations which is fulfilling the organisation's expectations. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for the independent factor of innovative planning.

Table 5: Innovative Planning Construct

Innovative Planning Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Using the organisation's strategy as part of goal setting	211	1.0	7.0	6.241	1.0953
Setting goal deadlines	211	1.0	7.0	6.474	1.1779
Communicating clear performance objectives	211	1.0	7.0	6.550	1.0113
Linking up unit and employee goals to organisational objectives	211	1.0	7.0	6.594	.9631
Involving employees in setting goals.	211	1.0	7.0	6.622	1.0210
Using job descriptions as the foundation for setting goals	211	1.0	7.0	6.695	.9563
Innovative Planning And Employee Engagement Composite Mean Score				6.53	1.0375

The component/construct or aspect had six observable items or aspects with mean scores. The overall mean score for the factor was 6.53. As a result, the overall mean score implies that the study's respondents agreed that innovative planning has an impact on EE. The lowest mean of 6.241 and standard deviation of 1.0953 was recorded on item 1, 'Using the organisation's strategy as part of goal setting'. The findings reveal that respondents strongly agreed that using an organisation's strategy to set goals fosters EE in SOEs in the agricultural sector. Qualitative response from respondents also resonates with the quantitative findings whereby the themes identified centred on considering an organisation's strategy in setting goals. Mone and London (2018) postulate that communicating about an organisation's strategic direction promotes engagement.

The findings also indicate that setting goal deadlines is also crucial in driving EE in turbulent business environments. The mean score was 6.474 and standard deviation was 1.1779, indicating strong agreement that setting goal deadlines foster EE. The findings from the descriptive statistics also dovetail with the comments from key informant interviews. The key theme coming out from their responses was that goals should have deadlines, hence the need for ensuring that deadlines are set so that employees are engaged in a turbulent environment.

The findings from the descriptive statistics also indicate that, 'Communicating clear performance objectives', is also regarded as important in driving EE. The mean score for this item was 6.550, implying that the sampled respondents supported the statement. According to Pukalos *et al.* (2019), poor communication impedes effective human resources management implementation. These findings imply that communication is key to effective implementation of human resources practices, resulting in improved EE. Communication conveys institutional expectations and values, hence outlining the employee's role in contributing effectively to the realisation of the vision and mission (Bedarkar and Pandita, 2014). There is need, therefore, for the leadership of the three SOEs to communicate clear performance objectives to their subordinates, so that they know what is expected of them. The findings are in line with a study by Wolgast and Fischer (2017) who acknowledge that working towards a common goal encourages a shared effort amongst employees and it results in positive interactions. The quantitative findings on the need to communicate clear expectations also tally with some of the findings of the qualitative study which was established from some of the interview responses emphasizing the need for communicating clear performance expectations to employees.

The findings also established that there is great need for linking up unit and employee goals to organisational objectives (mean = 6.594; standard deviation 0.9631). These findings align with the interview responses which also established the need to link departmental goals to organisational goals. The responses by the interviewees regarding the research question, "In what ways can planning be practiced innovatively to drive employee engagement in your organisation?", all point to the need to align individual goals to organisational goals. The implication for the findings is for management in SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector to align individual goals of employees to organisational goals, thereby fostering an engaged workforce in a turbulent business environment. The preceding findings from both the survey and interviews are supported by a number of authors, including Mone and London (2018), Guerra- Lopez (2022) and Pukalos (2023).)

Managers are also encouraged to involve employees in setting goals, as suggested by the study's quantitative findings. The mean score for the item is 6.622 and standard deviation 1.0210. The mean score is high, skewed to the right, indicating strong agreement with this statement. The standard deviation values were less than 2 which is an indication that the responses were closer to the mean, implying less variance in the results (Hair *et al.,* 2019). The findings resonate the viewpoints of key informants whose comments all centred on the theme of employee involvement in goal setting. The research findings indicate that employee involvement in goal-setting is crucial to employees and, therefore, is worthwhile in fostering EE in a turbulent business environment. The research findings tally with the empirical findings by Aguinis and Burgi-Tian (2021) which highlight the fundamental role played by collaborative goal-setting in increasing EE and commitment.

Respondents also agree with item 6, that emphasizes using job descriptions as the basis for setting goals. The mean score for this item was 6.695 and standard deviation was 0. 9563. According to Pukalos (2023), job descriptions act as foundations for setting goals and expectations. Therefore, it can be inferred from the findings that using job descriptions as tools for setting goals is key to fostering EE in SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. The results from the Structural Equation Model and that of the descriptive statistics complemented by the thematic analysis above, have resulted in the development of an innovative planning model illustrated in Figure 2.

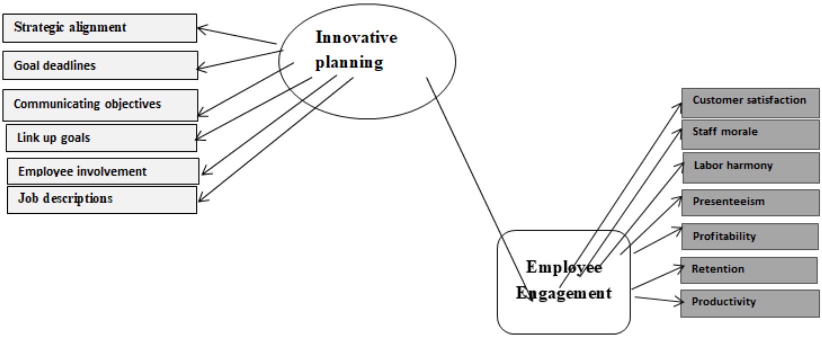

Figure 2: The Innovative Planning Framework

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The hypothesis developed was innovative planning positively impacts employee engagement in SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector during turbulent times. This hypothesis was accepted in this study since there was a positive and significant relationship between innovative planning and EE (SFL = 0.144; p = .000). The study, therefore, concludes that innovative planning fosters EE in a turbulent business environment within SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. The following conclusions are also made in terms of answering the research question on how SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector practise innovative planning to drive EE in a turbulent business environment?

The findings reveal that respondents support the need for considering an organisation's strategy in setting goals. The respondents argued that it has potential to boost employee attachment to their jobs and workplaces because they feel that they are part of the organisation by contributing to the organisation's strategy. The findings also indicate that setting goal deadlines is also crucial in driving EE in SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector during turbulent business environments. It must, however, be noted that respondents also suggested that short-term goals, instead of long-term goals, could be key to engaging employees in a turbulent environment to enable them to achieve them before they are overtaken by the forces of the turbulent business environment. Communicating clear performance objectives was also regarded as important in driving EE, indicating that communication is key to effective implementation of human resources practices, resulting in improved EE. There is need, therefore, for the leadership of the three SOEs to communicate clear performance objectives to their subordinates, so that they know what is expected of them.

The findings also established that there is great need for linking up unit and employee goals to organisational objectives. The implication for the findings is for SOEs' management is to align individual goals of employees to organisational goals, thereby fostering an engaged workforce in a turbulent business environment. The strategy of linking up when goal setting was suggested by literature, instead of the cascading down strategy as key to unlocking high performance of organisations. Managers are also encouraged to involve employees in setting goals, as suggested by the study's findings. Respondents also emphasized using job descriptions as the foundation for setting goals. Therefore, it can be inferred from the findings that using job descriptions as tools for setting goals is key to fostering EE in SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. The study strongly recommends SOEs to adopt the proposed innovative planning framework during turbulent environments to foster EE in SOEs in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector. The research directs future studies to test the feasibility of the innovative planning framework in other sectors.

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