Driver Management and Service Delivery: Insights within State-Owned Enterprises in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Driver management may be considered an organization's most valuable asset, and State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) must invest in it to secure their survival and growth. The study sought to establish the effect of driver management on service delivery in SOEs. Various empirical studies reveal that there is a lack of understanding of the impact of driver management on service delivery in public organizations, notably SOEs, resulting in sectorial and contextual research gaps that must be filled. The study used a mixed-method research strategy and a pragmatic research philosophy. In addition, 344 respondents from 86 SOEs were given standardized questionnaires to complete. The researchers employed stratified and purposive sampling. Statistical package for social scientists (SPSS) version 20 was used to generate descriptive statistics. All study items were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and research hypotheses were assessed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in AMOS version 21. The study findings revealed that despite having clear driver recruiting procedures, there is bad driver conduct and a lack of driver recognition programs to reward good driving. The study concluded that driver management has a positive effect on service delivery. In light of these conclusions, the study suggests that SOEs should ensure that drivers understand their responsibilities when using company vehicles. Furthermore, drivers should be periodically trained in line with the tenets of the New Public Management Theory which advocates for quality service delivery, customer centrism and reduction in rigidity.

Keywords

Abuse, Driver Behaviour, Down-Time, Responsive, Reliability,
Service Delivery

1. Introduction

Driver management may be considered an organization's most valuable asset, and State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) must invest in it to secure their survival and growth ([1] & [2]). SOEs are the primary suppliers of important public services including water, power, transportation, telecommunications, and postal services in both emerging and established economies, ([3]). Several economies across the world have depended on SOEs to drive economic growth, create jobs, reduce poverty, contribute considerably to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP), and provide equitable, long-term development ([4] [5]). In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) area, SOEs account for more than 10% of economic activity ([3]). In the People's Republic of China (PRC) SOEs account for about 30% of GDP, 38% in Viet Nam and about 20% - 40% in other Central Asian countries ([6]).

Most SOEs throughout the world are dealing with declining budgets while also trying to offer the best fleet possible to fulfil their primary business and service delivery objectives, ([7]). Similarly, [3] said that the restricted budget is being worsened as the demand for high-performance and high-quality public services grows. According to [8], one method to improve service delivery is to emphasize public asset management. Also [9], confirm that enhanced asset management has resulted in better service delivery in the United Kingdom as a result of the modernisation of the public sector under the New Public Management (NPM). [10] found that better driver management might enhance service delivery by reducing downtimes, lowering repair and maintenance costs, and lowering accidents.

A sizeable number of scholars emphasized that regulation is a motivating factor towards the fleet management, ([11] [12] [13]). Fleet management for SOEs in India proves effectiveness due to the fact that most of the drivers abide by the manual issued on asset management, the regulations and policy governing the fleet management, ([14]). Despite the importance of driver management, there is a lack of empirical insights on how it influences service delivery. Previous studies on vehicle fleet management practices have examined its influence on disaster and relief responses and humanitarian logistics performance, ([15] [16] [17] [18] [19]). This, therefore, shows that there is an interstice that is creation of an intervening space in research on the effect of driver management practice on service delivery.

There is evidence from United States studies that some driver training programs designed to reduce offence rates among drivers with a history of traffic violations may be effective, but this does not seem to translate into reduced crash involvement, ([20]). Driver training may be more effective in fleet settings than for drivers in general. However, crash reductions among fleets that have been attributed to driver training programs often disappear when the effects of other factors are taken into account, ([20]). Promoting driver training as a means of improving driving skills and knowledge assumes that there are deficiencies in

the skills or knowledge of drivers and that these can be improved via training ([21]). There is little real world evidence to suggest that driver training accelerates the development of hazard perception skills, or other cognitive skills. These skills can be developed via the experience of real world driving, ([22]).

[23], asserts that most SOEs in various countries are a fiscal burden as they continue to depend heavily on state subsidies to operate. [24] observed that in spite of state subsidies, posit that most SOEs in Africa are no longer able to satisfy the various demands of their customers effectively in terms of reaction speed, delivery policy, information services and flexibility. In addition, [25] pointed out that SOEs lack the ability to track and control the movement of vehicles and loose hundreds of dollars as regards poor fleet management practices. In the same manner, other scholars such as [26] and [27] observed that fleet management on SOEs in many African countries have in spite of good intentions generally been less efficient than private firms. [28] echoed that there is gross abuse of fleet in Tanzanian public entities since some motor vehicles are being involved in transporting unauthorized parcels, parking at drivers' houses, and in other private non authorized parking slots.

In Zimbabwe, SOEs are seen as important socioeconomic enhancers in sectors where the private sector is hesitant to participate owing to a lack of funds, a paucity of capital, and a fear of excessive risk, ([24]). According to the ([2]), SOEs play an important role in the economy since they have the capacity to contribute around 42% of GDP, as well as a considerable part of domestic capital formation, industrial investment, and job creation. However, they suffer from terrible mismanagement, inefficient use of productive capital, corruption, decrepit assets, a shortage of credit lines, and a debt overhang, regardless of their contribution to economic progress and prosperity ([29] [30] and [31]). [24] also claim that SOEs in Zimbabwe have turned into extensions of political patronage and havens for corruption and mismanagement of public assets. These issues, according to [32], have had a negative influence on service delivery in these institutions.

Driver management policies and regulations in SOEs continue to be a problem in terms of assuring value for money and offering superior service that alleviates consumer misery. According to studies, the cost of vehicle maintenance is rising, as is the expense of fuel theft and widespread abuse of state vehicles, ([33]). These malpractices from drivers have prompted most SOEs to make reforms in human resources and public assets disposal but these efforts have failed to achieve desired situations. However, if the current inability to deal with driver management continues, these institutions' service delivery would be severely harmed. As a result, the purpose of this research is to look at the impact of driver management methods on service delivery in Zimbabwean SOEs.

2. Methodology

The study used a pragmatic research philosophy, which gave researchers the

flexibility to use the best ways to perform the research in order to collect more trustworthy data. As posited by [34], pragmatism helps the researcher to evaluate the problem from several perspectives and build a practical approach to study. A mixed technique approach was utilized in light of the pragmatic approach. This is in line to suggestions by [35] who believe that the mixed method is a result of the pragmatist paradigm, which blends qualitative and quantitative approaches at different stages of the research process.

The researchers opted for a cross-sectional survey because it provides precise results, good statistical significance, high representativeness, convenient data gathering and little observer subjectivity. The target population was comprised of 107 SOEs in Zimbabwe, ([36]). The sample size was of 86 SOEs was obtained using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970). Each SOE was given four questionnaires giving a grand total of 344 structured questionnaires. Structured questionnaires were distributed to Directors, Transport Managers, Transport Officers, Fuel Attendants, Drivers, and Mechanics. The study used stratified, convenience and purposive sampling. The researchers used stratified sampling to successfully divide the target population into homogeneous groups so that all elements of the population are well represented in the sample. Purposive sampling was also utilized to choose 25 significant informants, including directors and transportation managers. The key informants were chosen for their expertise in vehicle fleet management and service delivery. After then, the completed questionnaires were double-checked for accuracy and participant eligibility. Statistical package for social scientists (SPSS) version 20 was used to generate descriptive statistics. All study items were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and research hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in AMOS version 21.

3. Results

The descriptive findings of variables employed in the model's development are reported in this section. Descriptive statistics analysis and reporting, as stated by [37], should include, but not be limited to, total frequency, mean, and standard deviation. [38], strongly believe that the mean (M) is the average of a group of responses, whereas the standard deviation (SD) is a measure of the degree of consistency of the responses, or the spread of responses around the mean. [39] confirmed that when responses are the same, the SD equals zero, a small SD indicates equally unvarying responses, and a large SD indicates a huge fluctuation in responses. The responses were classified on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1) denoting "strongly agree", 2) "agree", 3) "neutral", 4) "disagree", and 5) "strongly disagree".

3.1. Descriptive Statistics for Driver Management

Table 1 presents a summary of the descriptive analysis of the responses for items that were used to measure driver management.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for driver management.

Item Code	Item Description	Mean score	Mean response	SD
DM1	The organization does not prioritize drivers' behavior and education with improvements in fuel efficiency and safe driving practices	3.99	Agree	1.007
DM2	The organization does not holds regular driver forums	4.17	Agree	1.081
DM3	There are transparent driver recruitment procedures	3.84	Agree	.978
DM4	The organization does not have individual driver recognition or incentive scheme that rewards good driving	3.88	Agree	1.013
DM5	There are no continual trainings and coaching about vehicle standards, maintenance and visual inspections	4.06	Agree	1.008
	Average	3.99	Agree	1.017

Source: Research Data (2021).

Results in Table 1 show that an overall mean score of (M = 3.99, SD = 1.017) was registered. The mean responses ranged between (M = 3.84, SD = 0.978) (Item DM3) and (M = 4.17, SD = 1.081) (Item DM2). This implies that despite having transparent driver recruitment procedures, fleet management is SOEs is heavily influenced by poor driver behaviour, lack driver training and recognition and lack of driver recognition schemes to reward good driving.

3.2. Descriptive Statistics for Service Delivery

Table 2 presents a summary of the descriptive analysis for items that were used to measure service delivery.

Results in Table 2 indicate that mean responses ranged between (M = 3.50, SD = 1.106) (Item SD2) and (M = 4.16, SD = 1.002) (Item SD3). The average mean score of (M = 3.87, SD = 1.044) was registered indicating that respondents were not satisfied with the level of responsiveness, reliability and the state of vehicles owned by SOEs. This implies that service delivery was below the expectations of the customers.

3.3. Hypothesis Testing

The researcher evaluated the effect driver management on service delivery in order to accept or reject the reported claims or relationships between variables as true or incorrect. AMOS version 21 was used to evaluate the hypothesised association using the structural equation modelling (SEM) approach. The structural model was estimated using Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE), ([40]). Model fit indices for the structural model were good (CMIN/DF = 1.89; GFI = 0.899; AGFI = 0.903; NFI = 0.910; TLI = 0.896; CFI = 0.919 and RMSEA = 0.147). The results of the hypothesis test are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for service delivery.

Item Code	Item Description	Mean score	Mean response	SD
SD1	The organization does not respond to customer enquiries in time	4.06	Agree	1.005
SD2	Customers incur high costs in getting the services	3.50	Agree	1.106
SD3	Vehicle fleet and other facilities are well maintained	4.16	Agree	1.002
SD4	There is high vehicle downtime and breakdowns	3.91	Agree	1.003
SD5	There is poor rapport between the organization and its customer	3.71	Agree	1.106
	Average	**3.87**	**Agree**	**1.044**

Source: Research Data (2021).

Table 3. Hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Hypothesised Relationship	SRW	CR	Remark
H_1	Driver management → service delivery	0.298	9.782***	Supported

Notes: SRW standardized regression weight, CR critical ratio, ** significant at $p < 0.05$, *** significant at $p < 0.001$. Source: Research Data (2021).

Table 3 indicates that H_1 was statistically supported. These findings imply that there is substantial statistical evidence that driver management (DM) influences service delivery (SD).

4. Discussion

The study findings support the hypothesis that driver management positively influences service delivery. This implies that driver recruitment procedures, driver behaviour, training and recognition influences reliability, responsiveness, vehicle condition and quality of service offered. Several empirical researchers have found similar conclusions ([18] [26] [41] [42] [43]). This strengthens the position of the finding, and so H3 was supported. Many academics agreed that firms should seek to recruit and retain talented, devoted, and well-motivated employees in order to fulfil and surpass the expectations of their client base, ([2] [44] [45] [46]). In the context of fleet management, [18] assert that driver training should be prioritized to ensure quality service delivery.

The study findings established that there is poor driver behaviour management and education in most SOEs. [47] observed that the level of service delivery in public entities is unsatisfactory due lack of equal opportunity to all staff to undertake training and lack of consideration of specific needs such as fleet management. [48] explained that lack of employee training initiatives is severely

hindered by increasing budget deficits. [49] concurs that training provides an opportunity for employees to continuously learn. By the same token, [50] noted that driving training programs allows drivers to directly upgrade their knowledge, skills, abilities and professionalism which they require them to meet the needs of customers and respond better to their requirements. [51] reiterated that drivers should be provided with the requisite training to take care of the vehicles and also being able to attend to problems that arise when using the vehicle. In the same way, [52] noted that driver training enhances driver's skills and knowledge in delivering quality service. Likewise, [53] found that there is a significant positive correlation between training dimension and public service delivery.

The study established that SOEs do not prioritize drivers' behaviour and education with improvements in fuel efficiency and safe driving practices. [54] explained that management's effort towards ensuring adequate employee training will have a significant effect on the output and service delivery. Likewise, [55] noted that employee training and development improves employee performance in organisations, thus leading to improved service delivery, organizational performance and growth. [56] echoed that when organizations offer organizational inducements in the form of developmental opportunities, employees become motivated to expend their efforts in order to benefit the organisation. Correspondingly, [57] found out that, frequent driver trainings increase understanding of their job because the objectives of those trainings were to influence the workers' overall performance.

Conversely, [58] explained that there is no sound evidence that either advanced or defensive driving courses reduce the crash involvement of experienced drivers who attend. [59] argued that beyond imparting basic car control and road law knowledge skills, driver training programs contribute little to post-licence reductions in casualty crashes or traffic violations. Similarly, [60] emphasized that some driver training programs may contribute to increased exposure-to-risk for young drivers, particularly females, by encouraging early solo licensing. In the same way, [61] noted that some driver programs designed to reduce offence rates among drivers may be effective, but this does not seem to translate into reduced crash involvement. [62] [63] and [64] assert that improving knowledge and skill does not always lead to a change in behaviour among drivers therefore it is important to note that a driver trainer has little control over the post-course behaviour of trainees, the motivation of trainees to apply what has been learned or the many other risk factors that may contribute to crash causation.

The study publicized that SOEs do not have individual driver recognition or incentive scheme that rewards good driving. This implies there is lack of motivational initiatives directed towards good driving. [65] noted that employees feel valued when they are recognized and valued by their organizations. In the same way, [50] emphasised that that workplace performance improves when employees are to feel valued for the work they do and they need to see visible signs of management's commitment to their training and career needs. In that regard, drivers feel satisfaction with their job when they provide good service to the organiza-

tion's customers, ([66]).

5. Conclusions and Implications

The analysis shows that, while having effective driver recruiting procedures, most SOEs have a lack of driver training and education, a lack of frequent driver forums, and insufficient recognition and rewarding of drivers. It is critical to recognize that driving management helps drivers to immediately improve their knowledge, skills, talents, and professionalism. This means that if drivers are not properly managed, vehicle failures and accidents are more likely to occur. As a result, the study suggests that with adequate driver management, SOEs may be responsive and dependable. As a consequence, vehicle downtime will be greatly reduced, and the company's relationship with its consumers will improve. In light of these conclusions, the study suggests that SOEs should ensure that drivers understand their responsibilities when using company vehicles. This can be made possible through prudent driver recruitment procedures which explicitly state the job description of drivers. In addition, drivers should be periodically trained in line with the tenets, which are the principles or beliefs of the New Public Management Theory which advocates for quality service delivery, customer centricity and reduction in rigidity.

Driver education and training should emphasize vehicle standards and visual checks. Furthermore, driver training programs should foster the development of safe driving methods as well as an awareness of the Road Traffic Act (Chapter 13:18), numerous legislative documents, and traffic manuals given by the Traffic Safety Council of Zimbabwe. Furthermore, SOEs should develop a reward and punishment program to incentivize excellent driving while punishing bad driving. These incentives can also be given to maintenance personnel for their dedication and assistance in controlling and minimizing breakdowns. Effective communication between drivers, maintenance personnel, management, and other fleet users is required. This entails conducting frequent meetings, such as debriefing to review concerns including vehicle misuse, fuel usage and allocations, speeding, and health and safety. Policymakers must ensure that drivers and other fleet users understand their professional ethics as well as the numerous rules outlined in various legislative documents. Public Service Vehicles (PSV), for example, are governed by the Road Motor Act (Chapter 13:15), the Road Traffic Act (Chapter 13:11), and Statutory Instrument 168 of 2006. All public service operators must have an operator's license, a schedule of licensed vehicles, and drivers must have a valid driver's license and certificate of fitness, according to these legal documents. In addition, Statutory Instrument 154 of 2010 provides guidance on safety equipment that should be in the vehicle such as standard spare wheels, vehicle lights reflective breakdown, fire extinguishers among others.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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