# UNDERSTANDING THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURAL ELEMENTS THAT IMPEDE THE SUCCESS OF A BUSINESS PROCESS MANAGEMENT (BPM) IN SOUTH AFRICAN STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES (SOES): A SCOPING REVIEW

**Makamba Vuyolwethu[1*]**
**Salamntu Lumka P T[2]**

[1] Rhodes University; (Email: vuyo02makamba@gmail.com)
[2] Rhodes University; (Email: L.salamntu@ru.ac.za)
[*] Correspondence: L.salamntu@ru.ac.za; +27 46 603 8092

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**Abstract:** *Business Process Management (BPM) is defined as a body of methods, techniques, and tools used to identify, discover, redesign business processes to optimise business processes. In organisations it has been adopted to enhance operational and service efficiency and effectiveness. Despite its recognized potential, the success of BPM within South African State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) has faced significant challenges. Culture has consistently been cited as a primary impediment to the BPM success in organisations. Culture is complex, necessitating a focused examination of specific organisational cultural elements. This scoping review seeks to understand the organisational cultural elements that impede the success of BPM. A PRISMA-ScR checklist, and a search string was applied using an eligible criterion across three databases. A final of fifteen set of articles were selected using the Rayyan web-based tool, which assisted in screening the large volumes of literature. All the articles that did not meet the eligibility criteria were excluded. To guide the categorising of the organisational cultural elements themes a Schein's organisational culture framework was used. The emerged themes were categorised into the three levels as recommended by Schein: artifact, espoused values, and the basic underlying assumptions. The most prominent organisational cultural elements that impedes BPM success in the SOEs were hostile and riddled work environment that is full of politics and poor corporate governance. Additionally, poor leadership and incompetence due to lack of adequate skills were also found to be the cultural impediments. Future studies can focus on strategies to address the cultural impediments in SOEs and foster a conducive environment for BPM success.*

**Keywords**: *Business Process Management, Organisational Cultural Elements, South Africa, State-Owned Enterprises, Scoping Review.*

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**Introduction**

Business Process Management (BPM) refers to a set of methods, techniques, and tools used to optimise business processes (Kregel et al., 2021). According to Vom Brocke et al. (2021) BPM is a holistic management discipline that is principle-oriented, and it is often referred to as the science of innovative business processes. While Salamntu & Makoza (2023) describe it as a tool for enhancing organisation's core and supporting processes, as well as for understanding and organizing tasks. A recurring theme in various definitions of BPM is its recognition as one of the most effective performance management methodologies used in various organisations (Ubaid & Dweiri, 2020). In this study, BPM is defined as a management discipline used to identify, discover, redesign business processes in order to optimise work.

According to Kregel et al., (2021), scholars have studied the relationship between organisational culture and BPM and concluded that organisational culture has a significant influence on BPM. It is known that culture has a significant impact on BPM success. However, BPM initiatives do not always succeed in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) especially in South Africa. Thus, this study seeks to understand the cultural elements that impede the success of BPM in South African State-Owned Enterprises. As reported by Grisold et al. (2021), the BPM discipline has materialised from the management concept known as the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) during the 1990s. This concept was meant to improve business performance by digitally transforming business processes. However, this has not been the case in SOEs.

South Africa has a number of SOEs that were introduced with the intent to redress market failures and achieve a lower cost for public goods and services Chitiga- Mabugu et al., (2021), further alludes that the SOEs were aimed towards domestic markets. SOEs are also growing on global markets and are at times in competition with the private sector organisations. Mutize & Tefera (2020) also state that the economic strategy for preserving some SOEs after the privatisation of companies was to allow service provision to the vulnerable members of the country. It is essential to keep the SOEs fully functional and optimising business processes to preserve the mandate they were created for which is to serve the public. The South African government recognises SOEs as tools that are used to stimulate economic development with emphasis on maintaining financial sustainability and to improve their influence on societies (OECD,2015). South African SOEs include organisations such as South African Broadcasting Corporation, South Africa Bureau of Standards, Transnet, Coega Development Corporation, Eskom to name just a few. Each SOE was established with its own mandate; for example, Eskom and Transnet were established to provide dependable energy and transport services, respectively, to the resource-processing industry (Department of Public Enterprises, 2014). The Coega Development Corporation was established to provide competitive investment locations that enable socio-economic growth in the Eastern Cape province and the rest of South Africa. Other SOEs as mentioned, have their own unique mandate which ultimately focuses on service delivery.

Generally, the South African SOEs are underperforming, and this is often associated with the culture of the organisation. Akpa et al. (2021) highlight that positive organisational performance is closely linked to a well-defined organisational culture. Mutize & Tefera (2020), further argue that the reason that the South African SOEs are underperforming is associated with poor corporate governance practices like a lack of internal controls, lack of transparency and oversight, nepotism and corruption, and gross inefficiencies. These factors collectively contribute to a specific culture within SOEs, the precise elements of which remain unknown.

Culture is a broad term that is understood differently by various scholars across disciplines. Organisational culture is a set of shared values, beliefs and norms in an organisation (Akpa et al., 2021). It is further explained that organisational culture influences how employees behave in an organisation and the success of a business depends on the culture that is instilled in the organisation. On the other hand, Lekgothoane et al., (2020) define organisational culture as a system of shared meaning held by members, distinguishing the organisation from other organisations. Meaning to say, an organisational culture determines how productive an organisation is and can be. In that the organisational culture can have positive or negative effects on the performance of the organisation strategy (Lekgothoane et al., 2020). The cultural elements are mentioned to affect employee effectiveness and how the organisation performs (Lekgothoane et al., 2020).

Since culture is a broad concept, it is important to look into the organisational cultural elements that cause BPM to fail, particularly in South African SOEs as millions of rands have been invested to such initiatives. Currently, there are limited studies that focus on organisational cultural elements that hinder the success of BPM, particularly in South African SOEs. Thus, this paper seeks to understand the organisational cultural elements that impede the success of a BPM in South African State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

The research question is: what are the organisational cultural elements that impede the success of a Business Process Management in South African State-Owned Enterprises?

**Method**
This scoping review followed the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) framework. According to the JBI framework, scoping reviews are used to map existing literature in a given field and the aim of conducting scoping reviews is to provide a summary of existing literature. It has also been highlighted that scoping reviews are useful in integrating existing evidence from different disciplines and to provide new evidence that addresses the gap in different research areas. In this case, this scoping review integrates evidence from the social science discipline to the information systems discipline relating to organisational culture and BPM. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) was used to analyse and organise data effectively while ensuring data integrity and consistency.

**Eligibility criteria**
This study only made use of peer-reviewed articles from years 2020 to 2024. These articles had to be written in the English language. The selected articles included the keywords such as business process management, organisational culture, South African State-Owned Enterprises. Emerald Insight, Semantic Scholar, and Google Scholar were the databases selected and they were all scientific and provided rich information.

The JBI framework suggests the use of a PCC framework in order to identify the study's population, concept and context. Table 1 shows the population, concept, and context (PCC) framework. The population depicts the characteristics of the participants, concept explains the point of interest the scoping review will focus on, and context gives specific setting (JBI, 2015).

### Table 1: PCC Framework

| Population | Concept | Context |
|---|---|---|
| South African State-Owned Enterprises | Organisational cultural elements | Business Process Management Impediments |

### Search Strategy

The search was carried out in April 2024, 'Business process management' AND 'state-owned enterprises' AND 'culture' AND 'south africa', was the search string used and was applied across three databases. Additionally, a backward search was conducted to find literature.

### Search Results

Figure 1. shows a PRISMA-ScR diagram which provides the process that was undertaken to select the database sources that met the eligibility criteria.
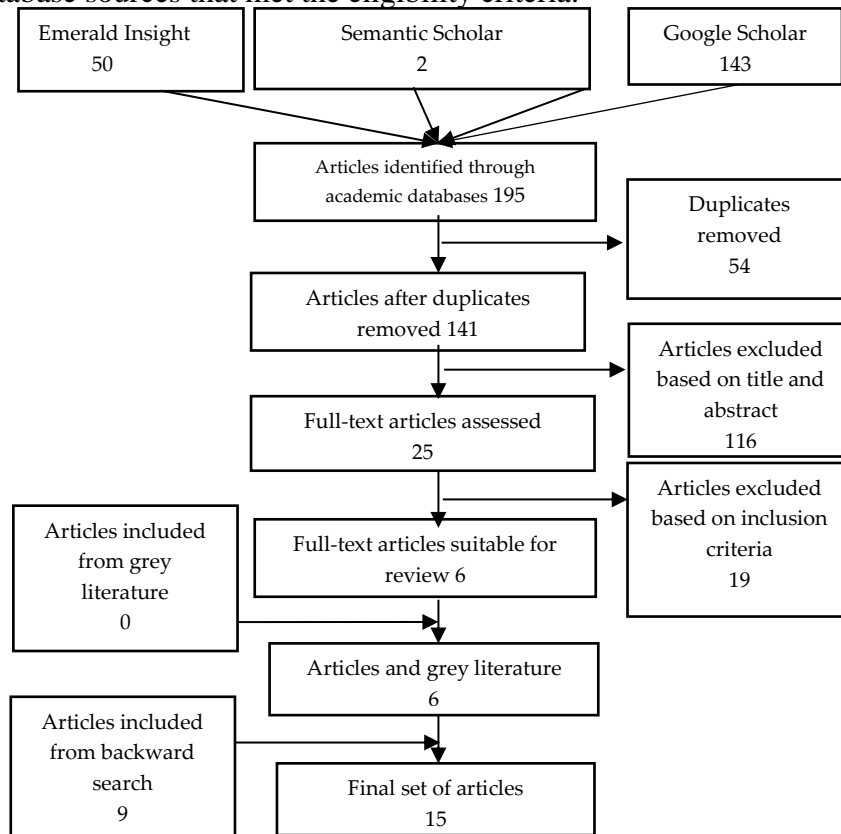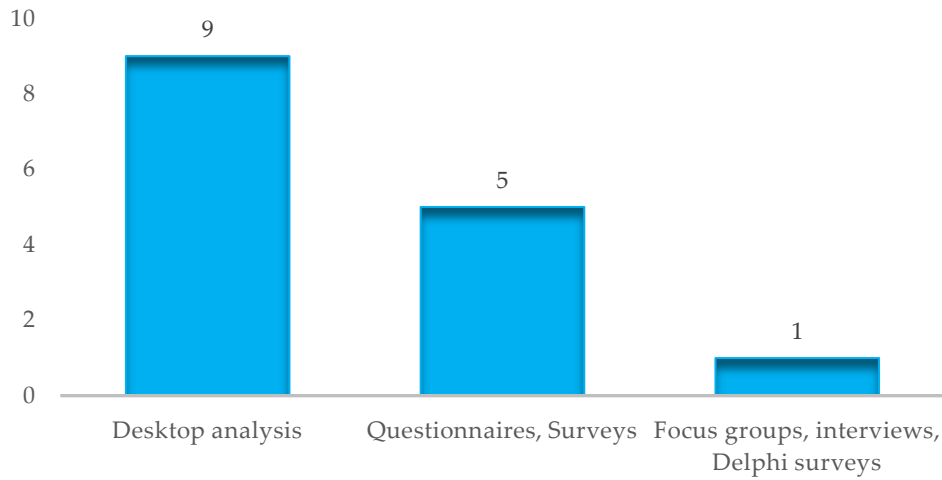


**Figure 1: PRISMA-ScR**

### Findings

#### Data Collection Methods

Figure 2. shows that the most used data collection method was desktop analysis, questionnaires and surveys followed with nine and five occurrences respectively. A combination of different methods, such as focus groups, interviews, and Delphi surveys had only one occurrence.

**Figure 2: Count of Data Collection Method**

### Research Philosophies

Figure 3. shows various research philosophies used in the fifteen selected articles. From the fifteen set of selected articles, six articles used an interpretivism philosophy and five articles used positivism. While realism was used in one article and pragmatic philosophies was followed by three articles. This shows that the majority of the selected articles sought to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. The positivist paradigm offers a more scientific rigour as opposed to the interpretivist paradigm that provides a more comprehensive understanding about the phenomena under review. The use of the realism philosophy suggests that one researcher believed that BPM practices exist independently of peoples' understanding and how BPM practices are applied in different contexts, therefore concluding that BPM can be studied objectively based on facts rather than how researchers interpret BPM. The pragmatic philosophy values practical solutions that can be effectively applied in real life situations and produce considerable results.
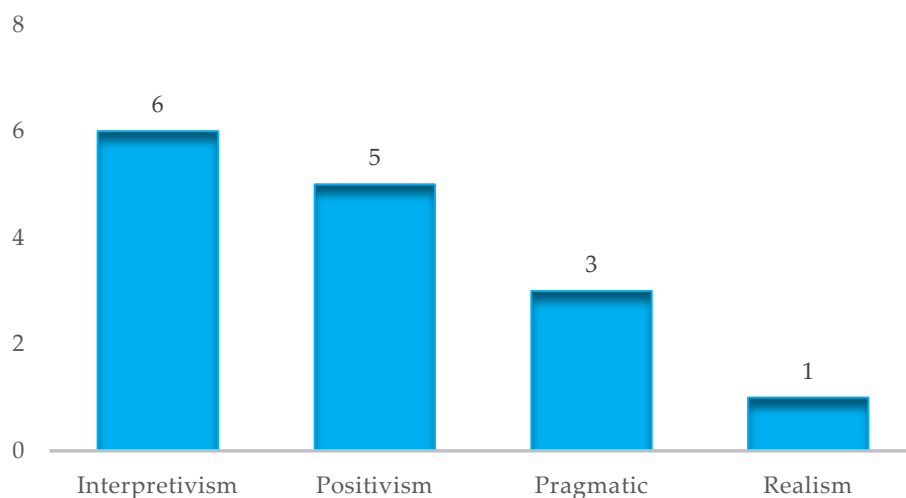


**Figure 3: Research Philosophies**

**Research Methodologies**

Figure 4. shows that most of the selected articles followed a qualitative approach which is 60%, 33.3% followed a quantitative methodology and 6.7% followed a mixed methods methodology. Most of the studies collected their data using a desktop analysis and this aligns with the fact that the most adopted methodology was qualitative and adopted an interpretivism philosophy.
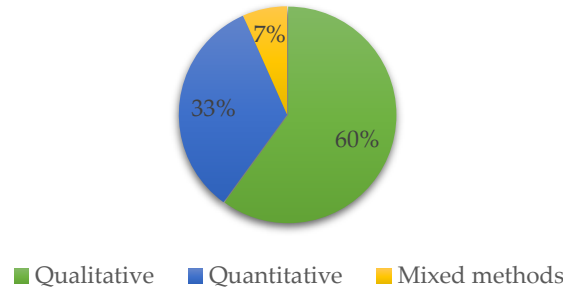


**Figure 4**. Research Methodologies

**Organisational Cultural Elements**

The following organisational cultural elements themes and sub-themes emerged and will be explained in detail. This was guided by Schein's organisational culture framework.

**Table 1: Organisational Cultural Elements adopted from Schein's Organisational Culture framework**

| Levels of Organisational Culture | Organisational Cultural Elements Themes |
|---|---|
| 1. Artefacts | Poor leadership, hostile work environment, environment rife with politics |
| 2. Espoused Values | Centralised decision making, value education |
| 3. Basic underlying assumptions | Resistance to change, lack of BPM awareness, incompetence due to lack of adequate skills, one-size fits all approach, poor corporate governance, adopting BPM that is not aligned to business |

**Discussion**

This review's purpose was to provide the scholars with an understanding of the organisational cultural elements that impede the success of BPM in South African SOEs. Based on Schein's organisational culture framework, the identified organisational cultural elements were categorised into the three levels of organisational culture namely: artifacts, espoused values and basic underlying assumptions. Schein explains artifacts to be the concrete aspect of an organisation, being the most visible structures and processes of organisational culture, while espoused values signify the strategies, values and principles that the organisation intends to achieve. The basic underlying assumptions, however, are the beliefs and values that influence perceptions and feelings in an organisation and is viewed as the basic understanding of life.

**Artefacts**

According to Schein, the artefacts are often visible and are in the first layer of the organisational culture framework. Artefacts represent visible symbols within the organisation. In this study, there are three themes that were linked to the first layer: poor leadership, hostile work environment, environment rife with politics. In this study work environment refers to how

employees are treated in their workplaces and how behaviour fosters their employee wellbeing, agility and overall productivity.

### Poor leadership

Quality relationships are marked by high levels of trust, which are essential between leadership and stakeholders within the organisation (Titus & Hoole ,2021). However, their research also reveals that the culture within SOEs is often defined by authoritative leadership therefore leading to a pervasive lack of trust, lack of collaboration and commitment, and low morale. Leaders aiming to initiate and drive change within SOEs often struggle to navigate and overcome the rigid power structures of top executives and political leaders because of their lack of influence thereby acting as a barrier to positive change (Titus & Hoole, 2021). For a successful BPM, Salamntu & Makoza (2023) claim that there should be a common established understanding and strong validation from top management for BPM to be highly successful. Therefore, poor leadership in South African SOEs hinder the success of BPM.

### Hostile work environment

The culture at South African SOEs is identified to be hostile Lekgothoane et al., (2020). A hostile environment fosters discriminatory behaviour during performance appraisals, and this leads to more adverse issues. It has been highlighted that the employees are facing harassment in the workplace, often receiving negative performance evaluation and are denied career development prospects. Such culture leads to consequences such as employees doing the minimum required of them leading to high resignation rates. Therefore, it was found that a hostile work environment impedes the success of BPM in South African SOEs.

### Environment rife with politics

The culture in South African SOEs is identified as rife with politics, this means that employees lack professional mentoring and employee development is not realised as important (Salamntu & Makoza, 2023). A rife culture is classified by a prevalent aggression in the workplace, there is lack of development regarding the changing scope of business processes and the application of BPM (Lekgothoane et al., 2020). Mutize & Tefera (2020) identified undue political interference while Salamntu & Makoza (2023) refer to this as a prevalence of government involvement beyond the assigned role therefore contributing to a culture of power struggles and undue benefits to the government personnel. Therefore, an environment that is rife with politics hinders the success of BPM in South African SOEs.

### Espoused Values

According to Schein (2004), espoused values are often found in the organisation's mission statement, vision and goals. Schein (2004) further explains that these values are not always realised in organisations. Two espoused were identified in this study namely: centralised decision making and value education.

### Centralised decision making

Centralised decision-making is characterised by a reduction in employee engagement and only senior management makes decisions (Mbengo & Salamntu, 2024). Centralised decision making in organisations inhibits employee engagement and therefore acts as a barrier to the success of BPM. (Mbengo & Salamntu, 2024). Decisions made by senior leadership usually get leaked prior to a public notice and have adverse effects such as distrust among the organisation and affect employee well-being and productivity (Titus & Hoole, 2021).

### Value education

The South African SOEs value education hence they make huge investments on training and developing employee's skills. Employees are empowered in order to enhance their capabilities in the manner in which they execute their day-to-day operations.

*4.3. Basic underlying assumptions*

Basic underlying assumptions refer to the unconscious belief and values in an organisation and actually determine how members of an organisational feel, think and perceive the environment (Shein, 2004). According to Schein (2004), these assumptions consider the nature of humans in different settings and their relationship to the environment. Six themes emerged were categorised as the basic underlying assumptions.

### Resistance to change

An analysis of Kurt Lewin's change management theory shows that change is influenced by the driving force and the restraining force. When changes occur employees in organisations usually resist the change (Mtongana & Musundire, 2020). According to Salamntu & Makoza (2023), resistance arises from a lack of understanding regarding the purpose and benefits of BPM, posing a major barrier to its adoption and ultimate success (Mbengo & Salamntu, 2024).

*4.3.2. Lack of BPM awareness*

BPM knowledge is crucial for understanding how each business process operates and goes along BPM governance in allocating roles to the employees (Mbengo & Salamntu, 2024). In agreement Ubaid & Dweiri (2020), identify the lack of BPM awareness as one of the tactical concerns in terms of a successful BPM execution.

*4.3.3 Incompetence due to lack of adequate skills*

South African SOEs faces difficulties in service delivery, especially due to a lack of skilled workers and this harms service delivery (Nzimakwe, 2023). According to Salamntu & Makoza (2023), employees lack adequate skills when it comes to BPM. Therefore, employees should be trained to improve their skills for the success of BPM.

*4.3.4 One-size fits all approach*

BPM methods need to be context-aware considering the fact that context is a contributing factor to the success of BPM (Vom Brocke et al., 2021). Furthermore, the researchers emphasise that a one-size-fits-all approach has a low likelihood of success. Organisations have different processes and therefore BPM should be adopted to fit different objectives rather than a one-size fits all approach that often leads to the failure of BPM (Mbengo & Salamntu, 2024). Vom Brocke et al., (2021) introduced the CAMAS Method that suggests that organisations should implement different use cases to assess the suitability of BPM methods to specific contexts. Therefore, a one-size fits all approach is inappropriate for the success of BPM.

4.3.5 Poor corporate governance

Corporate governance is the exercise of ethical and effective leadership by the governing body towards the achievement of ethical culture, good performance, effective control, and legitimacy (King IV Report, 2016). Mutize & Tefera (2020) have identified multiple corporate governance challenges that South African SOEs face in their operations. Such challenges include undue political interference, nepotism and corruption, weak capitalisation, as well as multiple and conflicting objectives. Organisations such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation, Eskom, and South African Airways have been involved in political interference where politicians have given favours in exchange for support. According to Mutize & Tefera (2020),

the Public Protector of South Africa reported that Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) was characterised by widespread nepotism costing SOEs considerable financial resources due to the incompetence and inefficiency. Therefore, it was found that a poor corporate governance impedes the success of BPM in South African SOEs.

### Adopting BPM that is not aligned to business

Scholars suggest that BPM culture has a positive influence on the effectiveness of business processes in various organisations, this then implies that the values such as customer focus, responsibility, and teamwork, all contribute to an efficient and effective implementation of organisational processes (Schmiedel et.al., 2020). Furthermore, Grisold et al., (2021) used the Five diamond method for explorative BPM to explain the effectiveness of BPM alignment with business objectives and highlight that the misalignment leads to inefficiencies and the inability to respond to emerging market changes. Additionally, implementing BPM that does not support the organisation's strategic goals leads to more ineffective processes (Grisold et al., 2021). Therefore, it was found that adopting BPM that is not aligned to business hinders the success of BPM in South African SOEs.

### Conclusion

This study has explored the organisational cultural elements that impede the success of BPM in South African SOEs. Findings show that organisational culture elements in South African SOEs are characterised by a hostile work environment, riddled with politics, with a lack of governance. It was also found that some SOEs are also under poor leadership. Despite the benefits linked to effective BPM in organisations, South African SOEs are yet to realise such benefits and this research aspires to aid these organisations towards understanding the impediments of BPM success. Further research is needed on how SOEs can be transformed from organisations with a widespread hostile work environment to organisations that focus on employee and consumer well-being.

### Acknowledgments

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