

Technology Adoption and Reformative Change within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service

Moses Cyril Ngawaite Chihobvu 

CUT Graduate Business School, School of Entrepreneurship & Business Sciences, Chinhoyi, University of Technology, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe

Citation: Moses Cyril Ngawaite Chihobvu (2026). Technology Adoption and Reformative Change within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service. *Journal of Business, IT, and Social Science*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51470/BITS.2026.05.02.10>

Corresponding Author: **Moses Cyril Ngawaite Chihobvu** | E-Mail: (mcnchihobvu@gmail.com)

15 April 2026: Received | 17 May 2026: Revised | 18 June 2026: Accepted | 21 July 2026: Available Online

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ABSTRACT

Technology adoption has become an increasingly important component of organizational transformation within public sector institutions, including correctional systems undergoing reformative change. Contemporary correctional institutions increasingly rely on digital technologies, information systems, communication platforms, and technological innovations to improve institutional management, rehabilitation programming, security administration, and offender reintegration. This paper examines the contribution of technology adoption to the reformative change management process within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS). The findings reveal that technology adoption contributes positively toward reformative change by improving communication, administrative coordination, information management, and institutional modernization. However, technological integration within ZPCS remains limited, unevenly distributed, and constrained by infrastructural shortages, inadequate digital literacy, financial limitations, and inconsistent institutional support. The paper concludes that sustainable reformative change within correctional institutions requires strategic technological investment, digital capacity-building, infrastructure development, and institutional alignment capable of embedding technology into rehabilitation-oriented correctional systems.

Keywords: technology adoption, reformative change, correctional reform, Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service, digital transformation, organisational modernisation, rehabilitation.

1. Introduction

Across the world, correctional institutions are increasingly integrating technology into institutional management, rehabilitation programming, offender monitoring, communication systems, and reintegration processes. Technological transformation within correctional systems reflects broader developments associated with digital governance, public sector modernization, and evidence-based correctional administration [1].

The transition from punitive incarceration toward rehabilitation-oriented correctional management further increases the importance of technological innovation within correctional systems [2]. Rehabilitation programmes increasingly require access to digital education, vocational training, communication technologies, and modern administrative systems capable of preparing offenders for reintegration into technologically evolving societies [2].

In Zimbabwe, the establishment of the ZPCS under the 2013 Constitution represented a significant institutional commitment toward correctional reform [3]. Technology adoption is therefore central to institutional transformation within correctional environments. This paper examines the contribution of technology adoption to the reformative change management process within ZPCS.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Anchors

Diffusion of innovation theory argues that technological adoption occurs through social processes influenced by

communication, institutional culture, perceived usefulness, and organisational readiness [4]. Organizations adopt technological innovations gradually depending on institutional capacity, leadership support, employee attitudes, and resource availability.

Socio-technical systems theory emphasises the interdependence between technological systems and social structures within organisations [5]. Technological adoption is therefore not merely a technical process but also a social and organizational transformation involving employee behaviour, institutional culture, communication systems, and operational practices.

Systems theory conceptualises organisations as interconnected systems where technological changes influence broader institutional processes including leadership, communication, training, stakeholder engagement, and organisational culture [6]. Lewin's change management theory highlights that successful technological adoption requires unfreezing traditional institutional practices and institutionalizing new digital behaviours [7].

3. Methodology

A mixed-methods convergent parallel design was employed. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires across ZPCS facilities, and SEM was used to evaluate the contribution of technology adoption to reformative change.

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews examining technology use, digital infrastructure, staff attitudes, and technology-enabled rehabilitation. Thematic analysis and triangulation were applied to integrate both data strands.

5. Findings

Technology as an Enabler

Path / Relationship	Standardized Beta (β)	p-value	Statistical Significance	Hypothesis Status
Technology $\rightarrow$ Reformative Change	0.192	< 0.001	Highly Significant	Supported

Statistical Result: Beta (β) = 0.192, $p < 0.001$ (Highly Significant)

Application Narrative: Structural Equation Modelling indicates that Technology displays a strong and highly significant positive direct effect on reformative change, confirming its structural role as an essential enabler. Digital systems directly optimize operational efficiency, data management, and inter-departmental communication. However, the qualitative insights validate that its full empirical potential is currently constrained by infrastructure deficiencies and technical capacity deficits.

However, the findings reveal that technological integration within ZPCS is significantly constrained by limited infrastructure, inconsistent electricity supply, inadequate internet connectivity, insufficient digital literacy, and financial limitations. A significant digital divide was identified, affecting both officers and inmates' ability to access and benefit from technology-enabled rehabilitation and administrative systems. The triangulated findings indicate that technology adoption within ZPCS is aspirationally valued but operationally underdeveloped. While institutional leaders acknowledge the strategic importance of digital transformation, practical implementation remains fragmented and resource-constrained. Technology's contribution to reform is therefore more aspirational than consistently operational within current institutional systems.

6. Discussion

The findings highlight a substantial gap between technological aspirations and operational realities within ZPCS. Diffusion of innovation theory predicts that institutional contexts characterized by limited infrastructure, insufficient training, and weak adoption incentives will demonstrate slow and uneven technology uptake. The ZPCS context confirms this prediction, with technology remaining peripheral to core operational and rehabilitation systems.

The digital divide identified within ZPCS has significant implications for reform equity and rehabilitation effectiveness. Where technology access is unevenly distributed, technological modernisation risks benefiting administrative efficiency while failing to reach inmate rehabilitation needs. Socio-technical systems theory emphasises the importance of addressing social and cultural dimensions of technology adoption alongside technical infrastructure development.

The aspirational-operational gap also reflects a broader institutional capacity challenge. Without sustained political and institutional investment in digital infrastructure, staff training, and technology integration, technological adoption will remain

4. Data Analysis

SEM analysis examined path coefficients and significance levels for the relationship between technology adoption and reformative change. Qualitative thematic analysis identified themes including digital infrastructure, technological skills, institutional modernization, rehabilitation technology, communication systems, and the digital divide. Triangulation enabled a comprehensive interpretation of technology dynamics within ZPCS.

superficial and unable to meaningfully support rehabilitation-oriented correctional reform.

7. Policy Recommendations

First, government and institutional leadership should prioritize strategic investment in digital infrastructure capable of supporting technology-enabled correctional administration and rehabilitation programming across all ZPCS facilities.

Second, comprehensive digital literacy training programmes should be implemented for correctional officers and administrative staff to build institutional capacity for technology integration.

Third, technology-enabled rehabilitation programmes should be developed and piloted, including digital education platforms, vocational training systems, and virtual counselling services, to expand rehabilitation access and improve reintegration outcomes.

Fourth, institutional technology strategies should address the digital divide by ensuring equitable access to technology resources across all ZPCS facilities and institutional levels.

Fifth, partnerships with technology providers, educational institutions, and development agencies should be explored to supplement institutional technological capacity within resource-constrained correctional environments.

8. Conclusion

This paper examined the contribution of technology adoption to the reformative change management process within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service. The findings demonstrate that technology positively contributes to reform aspirations but remains insufficiently developed and unevenly integrated within operational institutional systems. Sustainable correctional transformation requires strategic technological investment, digital capacity-building, infrastructure development, and culturally sensitive technology integration capable of supporting rehabilitation-oriented correctional management within Zimbabwe's evolving correctional environment.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service or any government institution. This paper is intended for academic and policy discourse purposes only.

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