

The effects of organisational commitment and employee perceptions of equity on organisational citizenship behaviour in Zimbabwean SMEs

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Abstract

Organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour have been extensively researched from the perspective of antecedents and outcomes. Literature shows that employee perceptions of equity relationships in organisations have been less extensively chronicled in research, especially in respect of organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour, within a Zimbabwean context. The objective of the study was to explore the relationship between organisational commitment, employee perceptions of equity and organisational citizenship behaviours among employees of small and medium enterprises in Zimbabwe. The research design is located within a quantitative research paradigm, undertaken through a cross-sectional, non-probability convenience sample (n=464). Descriptive statistics, correlations and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were used to evaluate the data. The results showed that perceptions of equity, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour are low among employees in the Zimbabwean small and medium enterprise sector. The correlation analysis exhibits strong positive linear relationship between the constructs. Further, the results of the multiple regression analysis show that employee perceptions of equity and organisational commitment are strong predictors of organisational citizenship behaviour. The findings of the study will benefit owners/managers of SMEs and government entities in improving their understanding of the issues of equity and organisational commitment effects on organisational citizenship behaviour within the Zimbabwean context.

Key words: *small and medium enterprises, organisational citizenship behaviour, employee perceptions of equity, organisational commitment*

1 Introduction

Employees are valuable assets and they have become pivotal for business performance and sustained organisational existence (Pourgaz, Naruel & Jenaabadi 2015). It is therefore not surprising that in the last decade academics and practitioners alike have exhibited considerable research interest in work-related issues like job satisfaction, work engagement, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour and

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retention (Radler & Ryuff 2010; Lumley, Coetzee, Tladinyane & Ferreria, 2011; Sieger, Bernhard & Frey 2011; Jung & Yoon 2012; Rothausen & Henderson 2014). Moreover, an array of research on organisational citizenship behaviour and employee perceptions of equity in organisations has emerged as a viable body of scientific inquiry propelled by the argument that organisational citizenship behaviour is an organisational phenomenon that deserves more attention and empirical examination along with other related constructs (Koys 2001; Yoon & Suh 2003, Ravichandran & Gilmore 2007; Cho & Johanson 2008; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff & Blume 2009; Park, Ellis, Kim & Prideaux 2010, Nicklin, Greenbaum, McNail, Folger & Williams 2011). The importance of organisational citizenship behaviour lies in its potential positive consequences and effects on work-related outcomes. Earlier research studies have provided evidence that organisational commitment and perceptions of equity enhance organisational citizenship behaviour in organisations (Ferris, Adams, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter & Ammeter 2002; Rosen, Chang, Johnson & Levy 2009; Park et al 2010; Crawford, Hofmeyer & Price 2015).

Notwithstanding the above, inequity issues often seem to emerge in management literature, as evidenced by labour disputes, emanating from employees' perceptions of inequity in the workplace, with resultant anxiety (Colquitt, Conlon, Wessson, Porter & Ng 2001; Nicklin et al 2011), which impacts negatively on job performance, cooperation with co-workers, quality of work, and organisational commitment (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey & Toth 1997; Botha & Cronje 2015).

2 The study context

The study was conducted among employees in the Zimbabwean small and medium enterprise (SME) sector as SMEs have become a focal point for economic growth (Gono 2009; Maseko et al 2012; Karedza, Sikwila, Mpfu & Makurumidze 2014). It is evident from the literature review that SMEs encompass a wide range of definitions and statistical measures, varying from country to country, and differently reported by various sources. The criteria commonly used in Zimbabwe to describe SMEs range from the number of employees, total net assets and sales to investment levels (Chinomona & Pretorius 2011). Descriptions within the Zimbabwean context also refer to SMEs as registered enterprises with a maximum of 100 employees and an annual sales turnover of a maximum of US\$ 800 000 (Machipisa 1998; Nyoni 2002) which are not a subsidiary or branch of a large business enterprise. Moreover, these entities do not hold assets in any fiduciary capacity for a group of outside investors (e.g. banks, insurance entities, security brokers) but for owners, who are usually managers. Large enterprises are described as entities that carry a turnover in excess of US\$ 800 000, belong to a subsidiary or branch or an associate of a large business enterprise and employ in excess of 100 employees, have a large capital base and are more capital-intensive (Maseko et al 2012).

As in other countries, SMEs in Zimbabwe are regarded as engines of economic growth and instruments of employment generation. However, SMEs in Zimbabwe are hampered by a lack of resources, which impedes their expansion and influence in the market (African Development Bank 1997). In Zimbabwe, the development of the small business sector is crucial for the achievement of broader developmental objectives (Chipika & Wilson 2006; Gono 2009) such as alleviating poverty, extending employment to rural areas, improving the situation of women and increasing indigenous ownership of investment in the economy (Nyoni 2002). Although this sector is important, it has been neglected by researchers, especially in the areas of equity, organisational citizenship behaviour and commitment.

Zimbabwe was chosen for this study as this country is experiencing a period of hardship, characterised by a high inflation rate, with a dire need for economic growth and reforms in the SME sector especially (Zindiye, Chiliya & Masocha 2012; Karedza, Sikwila, Mpofu & Makurumidze 2014). Furthermore, larger firms have withdrawn their investments from the country because of the high investment costs and high cost of borrowing and access to finance, which puts SMEs in a good position to foster economic growth. Overall, the economic outlook is bleak, with a sluggish economy, ongoing liquidity problems, policy inconsistencies and the current high levels of debt (African Economic Outlook 2015). As an illustration of the economic decline, in 2014 approximately 4600 firms closed down, resulting in a loss of 55 443 jobs. Recently an amendment to the Labour Act in Zimbabwe through a Supreme Court ruling (whereby companies are now permitted to lay off staff by giving 30 days' notice) could see firms shedding an estimated 20 000 jobs, which could further exacerbate the current unemployment problem (estimated at 95%) in the country (Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions 2015). In consequence, employees are barely holding onto their jobs, relying simply on extraordinary patience and resilience. Emigration rates are rising as Zimbabweans seek greener pastures in countries like South Africa, Malawi, Mozambique, Australia and the United Kingdom (Gono 2009).

In the context of the declining economy with persistent de-industrialisation, a growing informal sector and a deceleration of the gross domestic product (GDP), (African Economic Outlook 2015), Zimbabwe has focused research on trying to gain a better understanding of issues of organisational commitment, employee perceptions of equity and organisational citizenship behaviour among those employees who still remain in employment in SMEs in the country.

3 Organisational citizenship behaviour

Over the past two decades scholarly interest in organisational citizenship behaviour has increased. This has rapidly become one of the most extensively studied topics in applied psychology and organisational behaviour (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach 2000; Podsakoff et al 2009; Jain & Cooper 2012; Jung & Yoon 2012). Within the business environment it is presumed that employers will demonstrate good citizenship behaviour and employ workers who are prepared to do more than their job descriptions specify (Alizadeh, Darvishi, Nazari & Emami 2012). In earlier studies, Organ's (1988) description of organisational citizenship behaviour refers to employee behaviour that is not compulsory (i.e. it is discretionary), is not directly or implicitly recognised by formal reward systems, and that in aggregate promotes the effective functioning of an organisation. Such behaviours are therefore not an enforceable requirement of the role or the job description, in terms of an employee's employment contract within the organisation, but rather a matter of personal choice, so that their omission is not generally understood to be punishable. Employees who engage in citizenship behaviour help others and their team, volunteer for extra work, avoid unnecessary conflicts, respect the spirit as well as the letter of rules and regulations and gracefully tolerate occasional extra work (Cho & Johanson 2008:307). Evidence indicates that organisations that do have employees who demonstrate high organisational citizenship behaviour will outperform those that do not (Greenberg 2009; Jain & Cooper 2012; Chiang & Hsieh 2011; Jung & Yoon 2012; Magdalena 2014; Özçelik & Fındıklı 2014; McCunn & Gifford 2014).

Organ and Ryan's (1995) earlier meta-analysis of 55 studies further demonstrate that employees' job attitudes, including organisational commitment, have the propensity to predict organisational citizenship behaviour. Moreover, based on a review of the literature

on organisational citizenship behaviour, Podsakoff et al (2000) identified various antecedents, including individual, task and organisational characteristics along with leadership behaviour, which tend to elicit organisational citizenship behaviour in which a working environment is created in which there is assistance, praise and upliftment among employees.

Organ (1988) has identified five dimensions that include altruism or helping behaviours, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, civic virtue and courtesy. Altruism involves a display of voluntary actions by an employee to help a fellow employee with work-related problems. Courtesy entails a display by an employee of discretionary enactment of thoughtful and considerate behaviours that prevent work-related problems for fellow employees. Sportsmanship relates to an employee's willingness to tolerate the inevitable inconveniences and impositions that occur in an organisation without complaining and to do so with a positive attitude. Conscientiousness consists in an employee's displaying a pattern of excelling above the minimum required role and task requirements. Finally, civic virtue entails an employee's voluntary participation in, and support of, organisational functions of both a professional and a social nature (Allison, Voss & Dryer 2001).

Organisational citizenship behaviour is premised on fair treatment of employees, induced through social exchange, reciprocity and equity (Van Dijke, Cremer, Mayer & Quaquebeke 2012). Organisational citizenship behaviour may therefore be used as a currency of reciprocity by an employee (Jain & Cooper 2012). Yoon and Suh (2003) and Yoon and Lawler (2005) suggest that organisational citizenship behaviour is based on trust and organisational commitment, which is a fundamental ingredient, lubricant and unavoidable dimension of social interaction (Ke & Wei 2008). Hence there seems to be a logical connection between issues of equity and organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour.

4 Employee perceptions of equity

The study of equity or fairness is a topic of philosophical interest that dates back at least as far as Plato and Socrates (Colquitt et al 2001). Scholars and practitioners have increasingly recognised the relevance of equity as a determinant of organisational efficiency and effectiveness (Kinicki & Kreitner 2008; Greenberg 2009; Van Dijke et al 2012). Research has consistently revealed that people care about fair treatment and when individuals perceive that they are being treated fairly, they express greater satisfaction with social relationships (Kanopaske & Werner 2002; Almar 2005; Kinicki & Kreitner 2008; Park et al 2010; Nicklin et al 2011; Robbins & Judge 2011). Kinicki and Kreitner (2008) define equity as the perception that one is being treated fairly in the workplace. In this study, employee perception of equity is defined as the employee's perception of fairness of job outcomes, given his or her job input in an organisation. Accordingly, employees' perceptions of equity are premised on their expectation that the ratio between effort expended and rewards received at work should be equitable.

Employees expect fair treatment in the workplace and will respond in a certain way if they perceive unfairness. Unfairness results in labour disputes, strikes and a high turnover ratio (Cohen-Charash & Spector 2001; Colquitt et al 2001; Botha & Cronje 2015). It is further argued that perceived inequities in the workplace also impact negatively on job performance (Park et al 2010), cooperation with co-workers (Kanopaske & Werner 2002), work quality (Cardy, Miller & Ellis 2007) and organisational commitment (Balsam & Miharjo 2007). Therefore, if employees perceive the ratio of input to rewards to be equal to that of others then a state of equity is said to exist and this will

consequently result in organisational commitment. However, if the ratio is unequal the employees experience equity tension. Consequently, when employees see themselves as under-rewarded, the resultant tension creates discontentment (Janssen 2001). Inequity leads to negative consequences within an organisation whereas equity results in the smooth running and functioning of an organisation (Park et al 2010). Hence, there seems to be a logical connection between equity perception and organisational commitment.

5 Organisational commitment

The surge in interest in and attention to organisational commitment shows that it has become a significant part of an employee's psychological condition because employees who experience high organisational commitment are also expected in theory to display positive workplace behaviour such as high job performance and citizenship activities (Abbaas & Altarawneh 2014). Organisational commitment reflects an employee's attitude towards an organisation, which is driven by the values and goals of an organisation and reflected in their willingness to make a greater effort to perform the tasks necessary to achieve these organisational goals. Perhaps the seminal work of Allen and Meyer (1990), namely their three-component model of organisational commitment, best describes this concept and dominates academic literature. They identify affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment. The affective component refers to the employees' identification with, involvement in and attachment to their organisation. The basis of continuance commitment is employees' evaluation of the costs of leaving or discontinuing a particular activity in their organisations. Employees may often prefer to stay in the organisation because their perception is that they have no alternative or they have weighed up the high cost of leaving (Allen & Meyer 1990). The normative component refers to a sense of obligation to the organisation based on the loyalty they feel on moral grounds. It is important to note that these three forms of commitment are not mutually exclusive because employees may experience them all in varying degrees.

Drawing on the extant literature, it is concluded that by and large committed individuals believe in and accept organisational goals and values. This means that individuals are willing to remain with their organisation and devote considerable effort towards achieving the organisation's goals (Mowday, Porter & Steers 1979; Cater & Zabka 2009; Tanga, Liub, Oh & Weitz 2014). Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian (1974) identify the following three major components of organisational commitment: (1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organisation's goals, (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation, and (3) a definite desire to maintain organisational membership.

Literature has also affirmed a positive correlation between other constructs, such as employee engagement and organisational citizenship behaviour. Saks (2006) defines employee engagement as the extent to which employees are attentive and absorbed in the performance of their duties. Schaufeli and Salanova's (2008) study observed that when engagement level increases the level of organisational commitment also increases, enhancing job satisfaction and pro-social behaviour such as organisational citizenship. Moreover, organisational commitment has been reported to influence employees through the manner in which they are dedicated, responsible and loyal to an organisation (Permarupan, Saufi, Kasim & Balakrishnan 2013). This sense of commitment among employees could serve not only to preserve the longevity of the business, but also to create a positive working environment for employees and their organisational citizenship behaviours (Yamaguchi 2013; Velickovic et al 2014).

6 Research objective and hypotheses

6.1 Research objective

Our objective in this study was to examine the relationship between organisational commitment, perception of equity and organisational citizenship behaviour among employees in the Zimbabwean SME sector. Further, the study examines the predictive relationships between organisational commitment and employee perceptions of equity for organisational citizenship behaviour. This article contributes to previously published literature on the different combinations and interrelationships between these constructs. The study further controls for demographic variables as possible confounding variables (gender, age and tenure) in the predictive relationships continuum.

6.2 Research hypotheses

Based on the literature, hypotheses on the relationships between research constructs were developed. It was expected that positive relationships would be found to exist between organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour, employee perceptions of equity and organisational citizenship behaviour and employee perceptions of equity and organisational commitment. Further, it was presumed that organisational commitment and employee perceptions of equity would act as strong predictors of organisational citizenship behaviour within the Zimbabwean SME context. Organisational commitment and employee perceptions of equity were treated as independent variables and organisational citizenship behaviour as the dependent variable.

The following hypotheses were therefore formulated for the study:

H₁: Positive relationships exist between organisational commitment, perceptions of equity and organisational citizenship behaviour.

H_{2a}: Employee perceptions of equity predict organisational citizenship behaviour.

H_{2b}: Organisational commitment predicts organisational citizenship behaviour.

7 Research method

7.1 Research approach

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was used in this study in order to achieve the objectives of the study. Quantitative research allows researchers to provide statistical information and to examine the relationship between constructs of research interest (Dhurup 2015).

7.2 Participants

A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to collect the data. The sample was drawn from the major cities in Zimbabwe (Chitungwiza, Bulawayo, Bindura, Chinhoyi and Harare). The biographical and demographic information of the sampled participants is presented in Table 1. The sample (n=464) was drawn from non-managerial employees. Non-managerial employees were chosen as they receive lower pay and fewer benefits than those in managerial positions, who are well catered for by organisations in terms of high remuneration and other company assistance such as retirement benefits (Gono 2006; Gono 2009). The sample was predominately made up of women (68%), of whom (63%) were married and were primarily in the establishment

stage of their career (42% were 26–33 years of age), with a large percentage (37%) of participants having worked for the organisation for 6–10 years. A large percentage of the participants (42%) had worked for their respective organisations for more than 10 years.

Table 1
Sample biographical and demographic characteristics

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	152	32.5%
Female	312	67.5%
Total	464	100%
Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	293	63.1%
Single	171	36.9%
Total	464	100%
Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	99	21.3%
26-33	195	42.0%
34-41	97	20.9%
42-49	61	13.1%
50 years and above	12	2.6%
Total	464	100%
Tenure	Frequency	Percentage
≤ 5	95	20.5%
6-10	173	37.3%
11-20	113	24.4%
21-50	68	14.7%
≥ 51	15	3.2%
Total	464	100%
Monthly salary in US dollars	Frequency	Percentage
≤ US\$100	10	2.2%
US\$100-US\$150	80	17.2%
US\$151-US\$200	201	43.3%
US\$201-US\$250	126	27.2%
US\$250 and above	47	10.1%
Total	464	100%
Type of industry	Frequency	Percentage
Service	301	64.9%
Manufacturing	163	35.9%
Total	464	100
Academic qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Primary education	109	23.5%
Secondary education	167	36.0%
Diploma/Degree	123	26.5%
Postgraduate	61	13.1%
Other	4	0.9%
Total	464	100%

7.3 Measuring instruments

The demographic section of the questionnaire included gender, age, marital status, length of time worked in the organisation and type of industry. Research items were operationalised mainly on the basis of previous work, based on 7-point Likert scales with 1 denoting strongly disagree to 7 denoting strongly agree. A nine-item scale was adopted from Powell and Meyer (2004) to measure organisational commitment. The following is an example of the items included: "I have invested too much time in this organisation to consider working elsewhere." Six questions were taken from Janssen (2001) to measure employee perceptions of equity. A sample question asked of the participants was: "I feel appreciated because I give a great deal of time and attention to the organisation." Five items were taken from an instrument developed by Jung and Yoon (2012) to measure organisational citizenship behaviour. The following is an example of the items included: "I am always ready to help those around me." All the scales were tested for their internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha coefficients) through a pilot study of 51 participants within a Zimbabwean SEM sample and were found to be reliable with α values exceeding 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994).

7.4 Research procedure

Permission to conduct research was obtained from the management of the participating firms. A covering letter accompanied each questionnaire, outlining the purpose of the study, potential benefits, issues of confidentiality and anonymity, time required to complete the questionnaire and voluntary participation in the research project. The researcher completed an ethical approval form obtained from the University to request permission to conduct the research. The research assistants obtained permission from the management of SMEs to conduct the research and administered the questionnaires to employees at the time arranged with the managers.

7.5 Statistical analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 for Windows (SPSS 2015) was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics in the form of means, skewness and kurtosis, frequencies and percentages were used to describe the data. Skewness and kurtosis values close to or below 0 indicate that the distribution is fairly flat (too many cases at the extreme ends) (Pallant 2010). Internal consistency of the measurement scales was assessed through the computation of Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The guidelines set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) with values of 0.70 and greater were used to determine the internal consistency of a measure. Spearman's rho correlations (non-parametric test) were computed to assess the direction and strength of associations between the constructs in the study, with a confidence level set at 95% with a $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance, since the tests for normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic showed a significant value of 0.000, suggesting violation of the assumptions of normality which is common with large sample sizes (>200 cases) (Tabachnick & Fidell 2007). In addition to statistical significance, practical significance of the correlations was ascertained using Cohen's (1992) d -statistic with the following guidelines: $r \leq 0.10$ (small practical effect), $r \leq 0.30$ (moderate/medium effect), and $r \geq 0.50$ (large practical effect).

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis (sequential regression), a variant of the multiple regression procedure, was used. It allows for a fixed order of entry for variables in order to control for the effects of covariances or to test the effects of certain predictors independently

of the influence of others (Pallant 2010) such as gender, age and tenure as in the case of this study. Three regression models were created. In the first model, possible confounding variables such as age, gender and employee tenure were entered as independent variables and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) was entered in the model as the dependent variable. In the second model, employee perceptions of equity (EPE) were treated as the independent variable and organisational citizenship behaviour as the dependent variable. Finally, in the third model, organisational commitment (OC) was entered as the independent variable and organisational citizenship behaviour as the dependent variable. Using a sequential approach the relative contributions of each independent variable were assessed against the dependent variable (OCB). Cohen's (1992) *d*-statistic was used to set the following guidelines for practical significance: R^2 values at $p \leq 0.05$, with values ≤ 0.12 indicating small practical effect, values ≥ 0.13 but ≤ 0.25 indicating medium effect and values > 0.25 indicating a large effect.

Collinearity diagnostics were also checked as part of the multiple regression procedure. This diagnostic tool is essential in analysis as it can pick up problems of multicollinearity that may not be evident in a correlation matrix. Firstly, correlations > 0.80 (Field 2005) were checked in the correlation matrix (see Table 3) to assess the existence of multicollinearity. None of the set of correlations was above 0.80. Secondly, the tolerance and the variance inflation factor (VIF) were examined. Tolerance values of < 0.10 and VIF > 10 would suggest that multiple correlations with other variables are high, indicating the possibility of multicollinearity (Pallant 2010). Based on these values multicollinearity (see Table 4) does not seem to pose a problem in the study.

8 Results

The results of the various analyses are presented. First the descriptive statistics and reliabilities are reported on; this is followed by the results of the correlation and multiple regression analyses.

8.1 Descriptive statistics and reliability

Table 2 provides an overview of the descriptive statistics. The mean scores for the three scales ranged from 2.74 to 2.83 (a score of below 3 out of 7, with higher scores showing agreement with the constructs), indicating participants' low levels of organisational citizenship behaviour, employee perceptions of equity and organisational commitment. The Cronbach's alpha values for the three scales were 0.73; 0.82 and 0.91 respectively, indicating that the constructs had attained adequate levels of internal consistency.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and reliability

Items	Means	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Composite means	Reliability (α)
OCB1	2.90	.814	-.352	-.407	2.83	0.73
OCB2	2.77	.728	.072	-.586		
OCB3	2.86	.800	-.182	-.604		
OCB4	2.80	.814	-.156	-.598		
OCB5	2.78	.795	-.036	-.670		

continued/

Items	Means	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Composite means	Reliability (α)
EPE1	2.75	.769	.013	-.580	2.77	0.82
EPE2	2.79	.792	-.087	-.600		
EPE3	2.77	.797	-.101	-.562		
EPE4	2.77	.793	-.095	-.562		
EPE5	2.80	.783	-.140	-.490		
EPE6	2.74	.785	-.076	-.512		
OC1	2.71	.778	-.046	-.483	2.74	0.91
OC2	2.74	.795	-.027	-.611		
OC3	2.76	.771	-.090	-.468		
OC4	2.74	.758	-.149	-.326		
OC5	2.72	.771	-.124	-.388		
OC6	2.75	.780	-.097	-.477		
OC7	2.76	.752	-.161	-.310		
OC8	2.75	.762	-.198	-.285		
OC9	2.72	.766	-.165	-.323		

Composite mean = summated means of the total scale. α = reliability of the total scale. Scale rating 1= strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. OCB= Organisational citizenship behaviour; EPE= Employee perceptions of equity; OC= Organisational commitment.

Table 3 provides a comprehensive correlation matrix of all the items that make up organisational citizenship behaviour, employee perceptions of equity and organisational commitment scales. All the item correlations were significant at $p < 0.05$. The correlation matrix is reported primarily as further evidence of the absence of multicollinearity, as alluded to earlier.

Table 3
Correlation matrix – all items

Variable	OCB 1	OCB 2	OCB 3	OCB 4	OCB 5	EPE 1	EPE 2	EPE 3	EPE 4	EPE 5	EPE 6	OC 1	OC 2	OC 3	OC 4	OC 5	OC 6	OC 7	OC 8	OC 9
OCB1	1	.252 ^{**}	.304 ^{**}	.258 ^{**}	.318 ^{**}	.271 ^{**}	.279 ^{**}	.223 ^{**}	.262 ^{**}	.276 ^{**}	.239 ^{**}	.238 ^{**}	.255 ^{**}	.218 ^{**}	.231 ^{**}	.241 ^{**}	.225 ^{**}	.230 ^{**}	.214 ^{**}	.203 ^{**}
OCB2		1	.322 ^{**}	.351 ^{**}	.513 ^{**}	.588 ^{**}	.350 ^{**}	.282 ^{**}	.394 ^{**}	.442 ^{**}	.397 ^{**}	.344 ^{**}	.389 ^{**}	.494 ^{**}	.354 ^{**}	.306 ^{**}	.457 ^{**}	.533 ^{**}	.386 ^{**}	.296 ^{**}
OCB3			1	.678 ^{**}	.317 ^{**}	.298 ^{**}	.617 ^{**}	.601 ^{**}	.336 ^{**}	.345 ^{**}	.549 ^{**}	.533 ^{**}	.410 ^{**}	.419 ^{**}	.546 ^{**}	.488 ^{**}	.360 ^{**}	.359 ^{**}	.501 ^{**}	.448 ^{**}
OCB4				1	.422 ^{**}	.237 ^{**}	.496 ^{**}	.689 ^{**}	.419 ^{**}	.303 ^{**}	.529 ^{**}	.639 ^{**}	.409 ^{**}	.378 ^{**}	.515 ^{**}	.541 ^{**}	.428 ^{**}	.372 ^{**}	.479 ^{**}	.517 ^{**}
OCB5					1	.610 ^{**}	.255 ^{**}	.337 ^{**}	.580 ^{**}	.533 ^{**}	.364 ^{**}	.383 ^{**}	.634 ^{**}	.584 ^{**}	.350 ^{**}	.391 ^{**}	.573 ^{**}	.547 ^{**}	.404 ^{**}	.407 ^{**}
EPE1						1	.389 ^{**}	.221 ^{**}	.465 ^{**}	.649 ^{**}	.445 ^{**}	.362 ^{**}	.515 ^{**}	.594 ^{**}	.426 ^{**}	.356 ^{**}	.540 ^{**}	.594 ^{**}	.390 ^{**}	.329 ^{**}
EPE2							1	.633 ^{**}	.262 ^{**}	.336 ^{**}	.609 ^{**}	.599 ^{**}	.365 ^{**}	.349 ^{**}	.564 ^{**}	.510 ^{**}	.334 ^{**}	.342 ^{**}	.527 ^{**}	.505 ^{**}
EPE3								1	.467 ^{**}	.215 ^{**}	.474 ^{**}	.678 ^{**}	.459 ^{**}	.347 ^{**}	.486 ^{**}	.590 ^{**}	.437 ^{**}	.402 ^{**}	.478 ^{**}	.589 ^{**}
EPE4									1	.632 ^{**}	.274 ^{**}	.351 ^{**}	.692 ^{**}	.577 ^{**}	.332 ^{**}	.337 ^{**}	.619 ^{**}	.558 ^{**}	.393 ^{**}	.435 ^{**}
EPE5										1	.445 ^{**}	.267 ^{**}	.537 ^{**}	.608 ^{**}	.437 ^{**}	.316 ^{**}	.498 ^{**}	.593 ^{**}	.437 ^{**}	.350 ^{**}
EPE6											1	.686 ^{**}	.288 ^{**}	.431 ^{**}	.681 ^{**}	.572 ^{**}	.425 ^{**}	.419 ^{**}	.547 ^{**}	.510 ^{**}
OC1												1	.510 ^{**}	.370 ^{**}	.558 ^{**}	.662 ^{**}	.521 ^{**}	.424 ^{**}	.486 ^{**}	.582 ^{**}
OC2													1	.684 ^{**}	.365 ^{**}	.429 ^{**}	.685 ^{**}	.606 ^{**}	.448 ^{**}	.487 ^{**}
OC3														1	.555 ^{**}	.273 ^{**}	.557 ^{**}	.671 ^{**}	.507 ^{**}	.461 ^{**}
OC4															1	.583 ^{**}	.369 ^{**}	.474 ^{**}	.695 ^{**}	.586 ^{**}
OC5																1	.585 ^{**}	.399 ^{**}	.503 ^{**}	.611 ^{**}
OC6																	1	.670 ^{**}	.410 ^{**}	.522 ^{**}
OC7																		1	.565 ^{**}	.487 ^{**}
OC8																			1	.720 ^{**}
OC9																				1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

For the sake of brevity and for the purposes of analysis, correlation assessments were evaluated by calculating summated means for each construct in order to examine the relationships between the constructs as set out in the hypotheses section. The correlations between the constructs are reported in Table 4.

Table 4
Correlations between constructs

Test and constructs	OCB	EPE	OC	
Spearman's rho	OCB	1.000	.689**	.652**
	EPE	.689**	1.000	.779**
	OC	.652**	.779**	1.000

** Correlation - significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is practically significant $r > 0.50$ (large effect)

The correlations between the constructs affirm significant relationships and large practical effect sizes between organisational citizenship behaviour and employee perceptions of equity ($r=0.689$; $p<0.05$); between organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour ($r=0.652$; $p<0.05$) and between organisational commitment and employee perceptions of equity ($r=0.779$; $p<0.05$). H_1 is therefore supported.

8.2 Inferential statistics

Table 5 summarises the results of the hierarchical regression analysis with selected demographic variables (age, gender and tenure), organisational commitment, employee perceptions of equity and organisational citizenship behaviour. In model 1, gender, age and tenure were entered into the regression equation as independent variables and organisational citizenship behaviour as the dependent variable. The results did not show any statistical significance with regard to the effects of the three demographic variables on organisational citizenship behaviour ($p=0.207$; $p=0.714$; $p=0.620$; $t=23.54$) where $p>0.05$. The results also indicate that the value for $R^2=0.007$ is too small (<0.12) to have any practical effect on organisational citizenship behaviour. In terms of the beta weights, all three variables made insignificant contributions to the prediction of organisational citizenship behaviour ($\beta=0.05$; $\beta=-0.02$; $\beta=-0.03$). Moreover, the $\Delta R^2=0.001$ indicates that approximately 1% of the variance in organisational citizenship behaviour is accounted for by the three independent variables (gender, age and tenure).

In model 2, employee perceptions of equity were entered into the regression model as an additional independent variable. The results show statistical significance ($p=0.000$; $p<0.05$; $t=6.35$) with $\Delta R^2=0.579$, which indicates that approximately 58% of the variance in organisational citizenship behaviour is accounted for by employee perceptions of equity. Moreover, the results show a large practical significance, $R^2=0.582$ (>0.25).

In terms of the beta weights, employee perceptions of equity ($\beta=0.76$) made the biggest contribution to the prediction of organisational citizenship behaviour, with gender ($\beta=-0.00$), age ($\beta=0.00$) and tenure ($\beta=-0.04$) making insignificant contributions towards the prediction of organisational citizenship behaviour. H_{2a} is therefore accepted.

In model 3, the final independent variable (organisational commitment) was entered into the regression equation. The results show statistical significance ($p=0.000$; $p<0.05$; $t=5.97$) with the $\Delta R^2=0.599$, which indicates that approximately 60% of the variance in organisational citizenship behaviour is accounted for by employee perceptions of equity and organisational commitment. The $R^2=0.603$ (>0.25) further supports a large practical effect size. In terms of the beta weights, employee perceptions of equity ($\beta=0.52$) made the biggest contribution towards the prediction of organisational citizenship behaviour, followed by organisational commitment ($\beta=0.28$), again with gender ($\beta=-0.02$), age ($\beta=-0.00$) and tenure ($\beta=-0.03$) making insignificant contributions towards the prediction of organisational citizenship behaviour. H_{2b} is therefore accepted.

Table 5
Regression analysis: gender, age and tenure, EPE, OC with OCB

Model		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Sig.	R ²	Δ R ²	Collinearity statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta					Tol	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.89	.12		23.54	.000	.007	.001		
	A1	.07	.06	.05	1.26	.207			.991	1.00
	A3	-.01	.04	-.02	-.36	.714			.374	2.67
	A4	-.02	.04	-.03	-.49	.620			.372	2.68
2	(Constant)	.74	.11		6.35	.000	.582	.579		
	A1	-.00	.04	-.00	-.23	.816			.984	1.01
	A3	.00	.02	.00	.08	.936			.374	2.67
	A4	-.02	.02	-.04	-.99	.322			.372	2.68
	EPE	.81	.03	.76	25.15	.000			.992	1.00
3	(Constant)	.68	.11		5.97	.000	.603	.599		
	A1	-.03	.03	-.02	-.79	.428			.971	1.03
	A3	-.00	.02	-.00	-.16	.869			.373	2.68
	A4	-.02	.02	-.03	-.76	.445			.371	2.69
	EPE	.56	.06	.52	9.20	.000			.268	3.73
	OC	.29	.06	.28	4.91	.000			.265	3.77

- a) Dependent variable: OCB.
b) Predictors: (Constant), A4 (Tenure), A1 (Gender), A3 (Age).
c) Predictors: (Constant), A4, A1, A3, EPE.
d) Predictors: (Constant), A4, A1, A3, EPE, OC

9 Discussion

The study explored the association between perceptions of equity, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour among employees in the Zimbabwean SME sector. The predictive relationships between employee perceptions of equity and organisational commitment and organisational citizenship were also determined. The analysis of the means reveals a low propensity in employees' perceptions of equity, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour, which may be a reason for trepidation. These results should be evaluated against an already ailing and declining economy and a harsh legal and regulatory environment, in which the attrition of more employees in the formal sector appears likely (Karedza et al 2014).

On a positive note, the correlation results point to high inter-relationships between the three constructs (organisational commitment, employee perceptions of equity and organisational citizenship behaviour). The findings suggest significant correlations with a large practical effect for both organisational commitment and perceptions of equity on organisational citizenship behaviour. These results lend further credence to the assertion that employees who are committed to an organisation and recognise that there is fairness in equity issues in the organisation are more likely to display organisational citizenship behaviours. This implies that a higher prevalence of organisational commitment and perceptions of equity could lead to higher levels of organisational citizenship behaviour. Previous research, albeit in different contexts, has yielded similar results in that organisational commitment is frequently cited as an antecedent of organisational citizenship behaviour (Schappe 1998; Schaubroeck & Ganster 1991; Ngunia, Slegers &

Denessen 2006). It is argued that committed employees are more likely to engage in behaviours that enhance their value and support the organisation. This is corroborated by Robbins and Judge (2011), who are of the opinion that successful organisations need employees who will do more than their usual duties and provide performance beyond expectations, ultimately leading to greater organisational commitment.

Furthermore, a strong positive correlation with a large practical effect was noted between employee perceptions of equity and organisational citizenship behaviour. Organ (1990) suggests that unfairness alters an employee's relationship with the organisation. Employees who perceive their relationship with the organisation as one of social rather than economic exchange may be more likely to exhibit organisational citizenship because a social contract is more ambiguous than an economic contract and because extra role behaviours may be less likely to be perceived as exploitation or submission (Williams, Pitre & Zainuba 2002).

It was further presumed that employee perceptions of equity and organisational commitment would serve as strong predictors of organisational citizenship behaviour. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis indicated the dominant predictive power of organisational commitment and perceptions of equity on organisational citizenship behaviour. When demographic variables such as gender, age and tenure were considered, only organisational commitment and employee perceptions of equity explained a significant variance in predicting organisational citizenship behaviours.

The positive relationship between organisational commitment and organisational citizenship can be located within the Social Exchange theory of Blau (1964), who posited that when employees feel that they are under an obligation to an organisation they will reciprocate with positive behaviour towards the organisation (Farzaneh, Dehghanpour & Kazemi 2014). Moreover, organisational commitment can lead to a stable and productive workforce and help employees to release their creativity and advance organisational developmental initiatives (Walton 1985). Committed employees are usually oriented towards achievement and innovation and have the ultimate goal of improving performance (Morrow 1993). William and Anderson (1991) further attest to the positive effects of organisational commitment, which include feelings of affiliation, attachment and citizenship behaviour. Becker's (1960) side-bet theory also holds true for employees who are committed to an organisation through an individual decision, which has led the employee to make investments, such as contributing to a company pension scheme or retirement plan.

The predictive relationship between employee perceptions of equity and organisational citizenship behaviour has also been established in earlier studies (Niehoff & Moorman 1993; Organ & Ryan 1995; Colquitt et al 2001) in different cultural and work contexts. Moorman (1991) posits that equity perceptions are important in predicting the occurrence of organisational citizenship behaviour and from an exchange theory perspective, organisational citizenship behaviours provide a means for employees to reciprocate fair treatment from the organisation. When equity rules are violated in organisations, employees are likely to believe that the social exchange has been violated, and accordingly respond to this violation in the form of decreased organisational citizenship behaviours (Blakely, Andrews & Moorman 2005). The underlying mechanism within the exchange perspective on the relationship between perceptions of equity and organisational citizenship behaviour is that, when an organisation applies fair rules in the workplace and informs employees that they are valued by the organisation, they are more likely to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour as a form of social exchange (Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-LaMastro, 1990). Employees' reciprocation may therefore

manifest itself either as an increase in job motivation or as an increase in more extra-role behaviours like organisational citizenship behaviour.

10 Implications for practice and recommendations

The findings of the study revealed some important issues that owners/managers of SMEs should take note of. First, the low levels of equity, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour should be addressed by management by strengthening employees' perceptions of equity, commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour. The use of internal marketing elements such as training, communication, empowerment and rewards may be a way to improve and increase employee commitment and perceptions of equity.

Owners/managers of SMEs in Zimbabwe should find ways of unravelling the innovative and creative potential of employees by working closely with them to strengthen their commitment and equity perceptions in the organisation. Owners/managers need to reward those employees who consistently display higher levels of organisational citizenship behaviours (Chipika & Wilson 2006). If such behaviours are rewarded, employees will have the best interests of the company at heart and workplaces will be better places to be. The reward system, mainly in the form of profit shares and non-monetary rewards, is a commonly used mechanism for motivating employees to be committed to the organisation. To secure increased employee motivation levels, SMEs need to make use of diversified incentives that could include salary raises, promotions, titles, trophies, holiday assistance, and assistance to purchase houses and cars.

Against the background of the ailing economy in Zimbabwe, managements of SMEs need to work closely with trade unions and various support establishments in the country, such as the Ministry of Industry and International Trade and the Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation, in a bid to strengthen the SME sector in terms of employment and the work-related facets of their human resources. If this could be done, employees would feel valued at the organisations where they work and in the process their commitment to their organisations would be enhanced and their perceptions of equity strengthened. Moreover, while government support for the SME sector has been repeatedly enunciated in various policy documents such as the Framework for Economic Reform, the Zimbabwean Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) and the Economic Recovery Programme (Nyoni 2002), much more is required from government to address the challenges facing the SME sector, especially the rate of attrition among employees. If the human resource issues are not addressed employees will feel insecure, which may further reduce their levels of perception of equity, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours.

Owners/managers of SMES in Zimbabwe should be sensitive to the concepts of fairness and justice in developing mechanisms to ensure that employees perceive that they are being treated fairly. A suitable working environment with fair processes helps to increase the willingness of employees to perform their functions. It is therefore vital to develop positive organisational behaviours and a work environment conducive to achieving the high-performance goals that result in organisational success. Employees who perceive that the distribution of tasks and work processes is equitable are more likely to develop a higher degree of commitment and a higher expression of organisational citizenship behaviour. Hence, owners/managers need to inform and involve employees in the decision-making process on work-life issues as their participation leads to

motivation, and hence commitment to goal achievement. A more participative process ensures cooperation and positive relationships among employees as well as the perception of equity on the part of employees, thereby leading to organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours (Botha & Cronje 2015; Crawford et al 2015). Employees should therefore be consulted on important decision-making aspects which affect their work environments and work-life through the establishment of appropriate employee structures.

11 Limitations and implications for further research

Although this research has made some contributions on the relationships between the constructs as they relate to employees in a Zimbabwean SME context, like any research project, the study has limitations that should be considered. The data were collected from employees from the SME sector through self-report measures employing a non-probability sampling technique and this could be a limitation of the study. Attempts to obtain a valid sampling frame ran into difficulties. Future research could fruitfully be extended to bigger organisations, in a bigger area or nationally, which might possibly reveal similar or different outcomes relating to the constructs used in the study through a comparative analysis (SMEs and large firms). Comparative analysis of this kind could yield augmented results through which researchers could develop richer models that capture and explain differences within a Zimbabwean context. Moreover, global evaluation scales (unidimensional scales) were used in the study since this was a preliminary study, undertaken in Zimbabwe for the first time to glean an overall perception of the constructs in the study. A comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the identified constructs could possibly be established through multidimensional scales. Consequently, the results of the study should be viewed with circumspection. Generalisations should be limited and other relevant research constructs taken into account. This study was based on a cross-sectional survey design, which measures the variables at a single point in time. Therefore, any changes over time in the variables being studied were not covered in the study. A longitudinal study could determine whether the levels of organisational commitment, perceptions of equity and organisational citizenship behaviours would possibly change over time.

12 Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limitations, the study provides fresh insights regarding these constructs within the SME sector in Zimbabwe. The key to any organisation's success lies in its human resources. In work domains where employees are treated fairly, where employees get along, understand each other, show respect and work in harmony, research evidence shows that higher levels of organisational commitment eventually result in higher organisational citizenship behaviours, given the appropriate support. Understandably, owners/managers of SMEs are concerned about the productivity factor and about keeping their organisations in the black but the other end of the value chain is equally important. It is here that their human resource element should be adequately acknowledged. Enormous opportunities are still to be found in the Zimbabwean economy as the country has a lot to offer in the fields of agriculture, tourism, mining and manufacturing and associated industries, which could be leveraged to the next level of economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is a challenge that SMEs have to face in Zimbabwe. It should be noted that this study by no means implies that employees are treated inappropriately in their organisations. However, if employees are thwarted and

feel frustrated in the organisations they work for, they are less likely to engage in organisational citizenship behaviours.

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