

THE UNIQUE FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN NON- PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The research examines unique performance enhancing or inhibiting factors among Zimbabwean employees in non-profit organizations in the capital city Harare.

Two research questions were formulated. First, “Are there unique work ethics inherent in employees working in the non-profit sector?; and second, “What unique variables affect workers in the non-profit sector?” We explore whether “workplace performance of employees in the non-profit sector is dependent on unique factors that apply in the non-profit sector and not in the for-profit sectors”.

Data analysis identified unique performance factors: de-motivation due to the absence of regular merit-based promotions for high performing employees; opportunities for employee advancement through a policy of competitive recruitment, and growth opportunities for local staff who can apply for international positions within the organization.

We recommend that non-profit organizations use creative, sector-specific approaches to motivate employee performance.

Keywords: employee performance, performance management, productivity, motivation, non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In a recent study by Mapepa and Adekoye (2019), the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions estimated that there are approximately 700,000 people in formal employment across all work sectors in the whole of Zimbabwe, within a total population of almost 14 million people. Are people motivated to work at a high standard in their chosen career or, as is common in Zimbabwe, are they just grateful to have the job they have? This paper explores the factors that motivate employees to perform their duties at their very best within the nonprofit sector in Zimbabwe. The purpose of this exploratory study is to evaluate the factors that affect employee performance in nonprofit organizations within the Zimbabwean context.

BACKGROUND OF NON-PROFIT SECTOR

Nonprofit humanitarian assistance organizations like the United Nations (UN) seek funding from the public and governments through grants and donations with no generation of profit. However, any allocated funding is ultimately accountable to each contributing country or donor. Plas and Lewis (2001, pp. 7-14) defined nonprofit organizations as "...groups that do not generate revenue in excess of expenses." This study focused on local employees of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and international humanitarian organizations such as the various agencies, funds, and programs of the United Nations. The aim is to understand the motivating factors of staff who work to provide a public service that is "economic, efficient and effective" (Cloete, 2008, p. 118).

CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH PERIOD

Zimbabwe has experienced significant socio-political and economic downturns over the past 39 years since independence from British colonial rule in April 1980, mainly attributed to weak governance structures (Bracking & Sachikonye, 2006; Mutisi, 2011). Elections are held every four years, and following the March 2008 vote, the ruling party Zanu PF lost the presidential election to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), forcing a run-off election. The MDC had garnered 48 percent of the vote but did not win an outright 51 percent majority, according to election rules. There were allegations of vote-rigging, troubling political violence, and lack of a free and fair voting process during the disputed March 2008 election and the run-off two months later.

There was ensuing political violence countrywide for the remainder of 2008 (Chigora & Guzura, 2011; Mutisi, 2011). A period of civil unrest and rapid economic decline followed, which was worsened by continued rampant printing of banknotes by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe during this election year. By November 2008, the resultant hyperinflation caused a total collapse of the country's Zimbabwe Dollar currency, formerly abbreviated as the ZWD (UNDP, 2018; World Bank, 2018). To put this in perspective, in 2008, a monthly salary of 36 trillion Zimbabwe Dollars, being bundles and bundles of banknotes, was only enough for about four days of bus fare on public transportation, or about four loaves of bread (Dugger, 2008).

By mid-November 2008, Zimbabwe's inflation was estimated then at "79.6 billion percent", according to a hyperinflation index developed by Johns Hopkins University (Hanke & Kwok, 2009). This level of inflation meant that if you withdrew money from the bank in the morning, by the end of the day, that money would be worth half its value from that morning, using the November 2008 daily inflation rate of 98 percent (Hanke & Kwok, 2009). This instability hurt salaries, savings, pensions, employment availability and created a significant lowering of the socio-economic status (SES) for Zimbabweans who struggled to buy basic food or commodities with their worthless salaries (Dugger, 2011; UNDP, 2018; World Bank, 2018). After lengthy negotiations, the political impasse finally resulted in a Government of National Unity [GNU] from 2009 to 2013, between political foes Morgan Tsvangirai and Robert Mugabe (Chigora & Guzura, 2011; Congressional Research Service, 2016; Cutler, 2008). As of 2019, the average government worker earnings were estimated at less than US\$50 per month against a cost of living index of US\$150, and data are heavily skewed in favor of those who are well-off and residing in urban areas (Swinkels, Norman, Blankespoor, Munditi & Zvirereh, 2019).

The research was conducted from 2008 to 2011, with the data for this cross-sectional research collected over a three-month period from February to April 2010, a year after the political transitional phase of the GNU had begun in March 2009.

From 2009, the adoption of a multi-currency system with the United States dollar used as the official currency (Makochehanwa, 2009; Noko, 2011) brought much-needed stability and

lowered the country's inflation levels for about eight years. In June 2019, the New Zimbabwe Dollar (ZWL) was re-introduced by the Minister of Finance, Dr. Mthuli Ncube, operating predominantly as an electronic currency and his op-ed in the "Financial Times" he explained the unavailability of cash notes from banks since 2017 (Ncube, 2019). Unfortunately, the new ZWL currency has been on an all too familiar hyperinflationary decline, reminiscent of 2007 to 2008 (Hanke & Kwok, 2009) worsened by daily 18-hour power outages that have affected manufacturing industries (The Economist, 2019).

Zimbabwe still has a long way to go to achieve sustainable social and economic stability. The researcher experienced the tumultuous period between 2007 and 2008 while working for the United Nations in Harare and witnessed how quickly a country's primary social service provisions in health, water, and education can degenerate into chaos triggered by political uncertainty. Renewed donor and investor confidence after dollarization in 2009 resulted in significant inflows of humanitarian funding that created jobs in the nonprofit sector (Noko, 2011). Fast-forward to 2019, donor funding in INGOs and the UN is shrinking, and long term structural and economic development is still required to bring the country back to acceptable United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] standards (IMF, 2019; UNDP, 2018).

The 17 SDGs were adopted globally in 2015 and are a framework for all UN programming worldwide, until 2030, providing benchmarks in priority areas stated in the graphic below (IMF, 2019). SDG eight covers "decent work and economic growth," which relates to the reviewed sector and context of this research. This research seeks to explore if the availability of decent work, as well as other factors, can affect employee performance. Other SDGs such as number one "No poverty," three "Good health and wellbeing," four "quality education," five "Gender equality," and ten "reduced inequalities" could contribute to employee performance, rewards, and the work environment in the Zimbabwe humanitarian nonprofit sector. These dimensions will be explored using the qualitative questionnaire designed for this study.

FIGURE 1

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (IMF, 2019)



No prior Zimbabwean baseline study for the nonprofit humanitarian sector had been conducted before, that could serve as a basis for comparison. Studies from 2011 to 2019 have explored general employee performance. However, a full-scale national study of this specific sector in the Zimbabwe context is still unavailable.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS

Employees and employers in Zimbabwe's contextual and socio-economic environment have to contend with the realities of a country that has its documented problems, and that has a reported formal unemployment rate of around 95 percent (Mapepa and Adekoye, 2019). This researcher seeks to evaluate what factors affect employee performance and if the unique political and socio-economic context of Zimbabwe plays a role in influencing employee performance in this sector. The research question is: "What are the unique factors that affect and motivate employee performance in nonprofit organizations?"

The research objectives are summarized below.

- Decipher unique factors that affect employee performance in nonprofit organizations.
- Investigate unique work ethics inherent in employees in the nonprofit sector.
- Explore what unique variables motivate workers in the nonprofit sector.

This researcher believes that the performance of employees in the nonprofit sector is affected by and dependent on unique factors that apply more frequently in the nonprofit sector than in other industries. This work evaluates whether unique elements do exist, and to what extent they contribute towards heightened or poor performance of employees within that sector. Due to the social context of the country under review, some aspects may also apply in similar countries.

Employee performance is the successful completion of tasks by a selected individual or individuals, as defined and measured by a supervisor and organization, to pre-agreed acceptable standards, while efficiently and effectively utilizing available resources within a changing environment (Armstrong & Murlis, 2004).

ETHICS CONSIDERATIONS

The research ethics requirements under which the data were collected were met, and approval was obtained from the Research Review Board. The university policy on ethics was followed and applied, ensuring that confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Voluntary participation was assured, and informed consent obtained before data collection.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will examine a case study, founding employee motivation theories, and human resources management principles to consider how environmental ~~and motivation~~ factors may affect an employee's work style, attitude, and performance. This section begins with an exploration of an Australian nonprofit sector case study in performance management. It will be used as a comparative research study based on a stable and thriving economy, contrary to Zimbabwe. Next, an evaluation of the applicability of traditional theories of motivation that have framed performance management since 1939, ending with financial, intrinsic, and extrinsic rewards as a useful performance management tool.

Australian Case Study

The journal article by Becker, Antuar, and Everett (2011) contains constructs that are similar to the themes and nonprofit context of this research paper. This article is utilized to provide perspective, a means of comparison, as well as discovering any unique factors in the broad area of performance management. Becker et al. (2011) investigated how performance management in a

nonprofit organization is implemented for the benefit of employees and the organization, and this research will focus on the following factors identified by Becker et al. (2011) as the main areas of higher-level commonality that inform the Zimbabwean context of employee performance:

- training, learning and skills development
- career development
- importance of consultation and feedback between management and staff

This research mirrored similar constructs used by Becker et al. (2011) in utilizing semi-structured interviews and input from focus groups to elicit perceptions towards performance evaluation. The next section will analyze seminal motivation theories from the 1930s by Bennis, Likert, Deming, Mayo, and Maslow that still have applicability to this study on employee performance and the research period, despite being written in different historical and socio-economic contexts.

Motivational Theories

For historical comparison, the theories studied originate from the early 1900s, and various studies on motivation gave rise to the introduction of founding approaches to explicate the factors that drive employee's performance (Jacobsen, 2017). The section provides greater detail to identify the relevance and applicability of these traditional theories to modern-day employee performance priorities in nonprofit organizations and the reviewed country's context. While Bennis and Likert focused on the importance of participation, Deming explored efficient organizational systems as a contributing performance factor. Mayo suggested self-motivation as a tool for optimal performance while Maslow posited the ascending order of human needs (Deming, 1986; Dresang, 2009; Likert, 1961; Maslow, 1943; Mayo, 1939). This researcher asserts that the success of an organization depends on a myriad of resources, with employees being one. Staff should be motivated to plan, implement, and evaluate, to achieve a defined, strategic organizational plan.

Bennis' and Likert's Participatory Management. Rensis Likert and Warren G. Bennis advocated for individual employee empowerment and a participatory approach to decision making within the organization (Dresang, 2009; Likert, 1961). Likert (1961) inferred that humans, by nature, tend to gravitate towards small groups either formally or informally. This research suggests that the employee/employer relationship must have benefits for both parties, through effective communication, and as partners, not tools. The researcher surmised that this theory adds credence to the performance management and evaluation process should ideally be based on sincere participation and mutual trust between the employer and employee. Each set of individual performance objectives should instill an overall culture of results-based performance that reflects and aligns with the overall goals of the organization.

Deming's Total Quality Management. W.E. Deming's Total Quality Management (TQM) "Plan, Do, Study, Act" (PDSA) model values the achievement of optimal work efficiency using systems that support the employee's motivation to work (Deming, 1986; Dresang, 2009). Deming argued that individual appraisals might be perceived as retrogressive as productivity is more a result of the group than the individual (Dresang, 2009). Concerning this research, Deming's theory highlighted the need to carefully analyze the systems that are in place in an organization, rather than just employees, to evaluate productivity and the motivation to work effectively. A shared shortcoming of the participatory management theories of Bennis, Deming, and Likert was the assumption that all workers want to participate in organizational decisions, which is not necessarily true in all scenarios (Dresang, 2009). This theory reinforces the study objectives of a planned performance management evaluation process that is participatory, designed to solve a problem, or result in positive change in how the organization actively addresses resultant outcomes.

Mayo's Hawthorne Effect. Cheminais, Bayat, van der Walldt and Fox (1998) and Dresang (2009) referred to William James Mayo's study of environmental factors' influence on employee behavior. Mayo (1939) hypothesized that the physical working environment directly affects an employee's performance and motivation. After his initial theory proved a weak correlation, he adjusted focus to the individual and personal aspects that motivate people to work effectively (Cheminais et al., 1998; Dresang, 2009; Mayo, 1939). This foundational theory by Mayo helped to position individual worker motivation as an essential factor in organizational productivity. This theory helps to highlight that even in the low socio-economic Zimbabwe context, this may not have any influence on employee performance. Still, instead, performance would be more dependent on factors that are driven by each individual.

Maslow's Motivation Theory. Abraham Maslow's widely quoted Hierarchy of Needs model below illustrates five levels of needs (Cheminais et al., 1998; Cronje et al., 2001; Grobler, Wärmich, Carrell, Elbert & Hatfield, 2006; Maslow 1943).

Figure 2
Model of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
(adapted from Cheminais et al., 1998, p. 155)



Maslow argued that some people appeared to be content to satisfy lower-level needs, but only after these are satisfied can they strive for the next level (Maslow, 1943). Hofstede (1984) and Cianci and Gambrel (2003) felt that the theory was more applicable to societies where individualism was more accepted. Despite the criticisms, the researcher asserts that Maslow's model has a considerable impact on the study of motivation and this research. As part of safety and physiological needs, remuneration, non-financial, intrinsic and non-intrinsic rewards may be an essential consideration for employee performance in a struggling economic environment such as is evident in Zimbabwe. However, as the research results suggest, higher-level social, esteem, and self-actualization needs were evident in employees who looked forward to consideration for prestigious international jobs within the organization.

In summary, Bennis and Likert emphasized building stronger and sincere employer/employee relationships in an environment built on mutual trust (Dresang, 2009; Likert, 1961). Deming suggested that performance evaluation must be supported by robust organizational systems where initiatives for change management in this area are a planned process and outcomes-based (Deming, 1986). Mayo's Hawthorne effect proposed individual-driven motivation as a more

effective and sustainable method rather than a reliance on just the organization to drive performance (Mayo, 1939). The section ended with Maslow reiterating that even with higher-level actualization needs, such as the prospect of a prestigious international job promotion, lower-level needs are equally important in the sector reviewed (Maslow, 1943). The review of the preceding theories showed that performance management is not just a formality. Still, it should create meaningful value for the employee and increased quality and results for the organization and its employees.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The Human Resources (HR) department has responsibility for staff needs in an organization. The HR Department ensures not only the acquisition of skilled employees, but the timely completion of performance evaluations by supervisors and their teams. An effective performance appraisal process can identify excellent performance or discover weaknesses that should result in the implementation of corrective actions (Cheminais et al., 1998). Extrinsic rewards provide compensation for the time, skills, and effort made by employees in fulfilling job requirements to achieve business objectives (Dowling, Festing & Engle, 2011). Financial rewards may include a salary, stock options, pension, retirement benefits, medical insurance, a subsidized canteen, or vehicle allowance that are all included in the remuneration package.

As asserted by Maslow (1943), monetary factors may be required to keep a loyal employee passionate about their job or the organization where they work. Non-financial rewards may include status rewards like prime office location, choice of furnishings, a reserved parking area, a personal assistant, or public recognition. Social rewards may consist of meal invitations and inclusion in the organization's social events (Cheminais et al., 1998; Cronje et al., 2006).

The variety of motivational theories suggests that there is no single approach to accentuating motivation. As stated by Bennis, Likert, Deming, Mayo and Maslow, and Human Resources Management principles, rewards paired with clear expectations, goals, constructive feedback, and a general culture of mentoring can encourage and instill desired performance by working synergistically to influence optimal motivation.

RESEARCH DESIGN

With the context of the research period described, as well as the foundational theories referenced, this section explains in greater detail how this information frames the structure and constructs in this research design. This cross-sectional exploratory study samples 103 staff working for 18 nonprofit sector organizations, during a specified point in time. The extent of the consistency in the measurement of the research variables is affected by the socio-economic and political environment within Zimbabwe, which continues to evolve significantly (UNDP, 2018).

The research format and measurement instrument included as an appendix at the end of this paper, used multiple data collection methods, testing, and data analysis tools to avoid distortion (Bryman, 2006; Jakobsen, 2017). The research results were evaluated against a literature review of theoretical approaches, the structured discussion panel, and interview questionnaire responses. All the data collection and analysis for the realized respondent sample was conducted using questionnaires pre-tested with nonprofit colleagues who did not participate in the final study. Colleagues were selected because of their familiarity in the field of performance management and the research context (Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozesky, 2007; Jacobsen, 2017). Commonalities were analyzed using tabulations and charts, using data segregated by social and demographic variables, and analyzed for uni-, bi- and multi-variate relationships (Jacobsen, 2017; Babbie et al., 2007). These associations allow for logical conclusions and inferences.

Questionnaire

The semi-structured questionnaire included in the appendix, was based on the research questions with ambiguous terminology removed during the design and pre-testing phase. Sections within the form were logically sequenced for clarity and cohesion and to reduce respondent fatigue that can affect the accuracy of participant responses (Babbie et al., 2007; Jacobsen, 2017). Exclusion questions included eliminated non-qualifying respondents working outside of the reviewed sector. The questionnaire sub-section headings were divided into five logical but unlabelled parts. This research surmised that by not indicating the different titles of the sections within the questionnaire, respondents could answer questions using a funneling technique, without inference to an implied section theme or label (Babbie et al., 2007; Jakobsen, 2017).

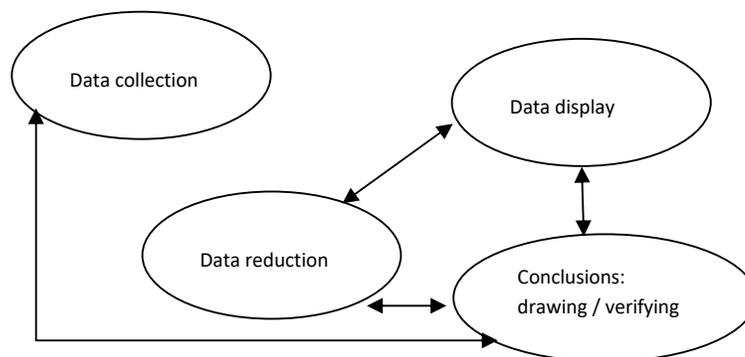
The five main subject areas on the questionnaire labeled in the appendix version for clarity but hidden on the actual survey are: social and demographic data, job selection, remuneration, the personnel evaluation report and employee development. The same structure and ordering of questions and content were used during the group discussion and individual sessions. A five-point attitudinal rating scale was used (Babbie et al. 2007; Jacobsen, 2017). Alternating question responses reduced central tendency, response, and order bias to both negative and positive scales. Mixed rating scales were used to counter acquiescence and prevent pattern responding (Babbie et al., 2007; Jakobsen, 2017). After the finalization of all changes, the final questionnaire was disseminated via email.

The Miles and Huberman Data Analysis Model of Qualitative Data

The Interactive Data Analysis model below for qualitative data (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12) focuses on data collection, data reduction, and data display.

FIGURE 3

Miles and Huberman Interactive Data Analysis Model
(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12)



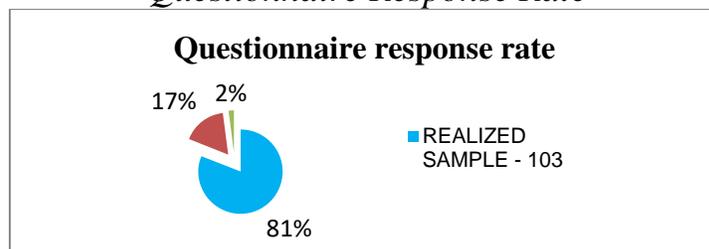
The directional arrows on the model indicate it is a process where editing, summarizing, and segmenting of data can take place throughout the research period. The model is a logical but straightforward tool useful in sifting through multiple sources of qualitative data and producing a thorough analysis of information. This researcher emphasizes the model's ease of use for this qualitative survey that includes a questionnaire, individual and group sessions, to capture data, record perceptions, and conclusions.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Out of the 127 questionnaires distributed to the targeted sample, 103 work for local INGO's or the UN, while 24 work outside of the sector reviewed and were discarded. In total, 103 respondents constitute the realized sample for this study, $n=103$.

FIGURE 4

Questionnaire Response Rate



Percentage of Respondents by Gender and Age Range

Of the sample reviewed, 58 workers or 56 percent are female, while 45 workers or 44 percent are male. The nonprofit humanitarian sector recruitment policies where this study took place, are guided by a United Nations Resolution to reduce gender disparities (UN, n.d.), which influences recruitment policies and gender distribution. Conversely, there are 24 men compared with 15 women in the older age groups of 40-60 years, reflective of historical imbalances in gender policies in recruitment evident in earlier years. A summary table of the age bands data segregated by gender is shown below.

TABLE 1

Age Range Data Segregated by Gender

Variable	Frequency	Female	Male	Percentage
<i>Age range of respondents (years)</i>				
Below 25	12	9	3	12
26-30	21	12	9	20
31-39	31	22	9	30
40-49	27	10	17	26
50-59	7	3	4	7
60 and over	5	2	3	5
TOTAL	103	58	45	100

Number of Years a Respondent Has Worked in Their Current Position

Closer analysis of the questionnaires indicated that some respondents had changed jobs during their years of service, within the same employer. An upward internal career movement is a type of intrinsic reward (Cheminais et al., 1998; Cronje et al., 2001) that can also be associated with upward career progression and a shift to greater responsibilities (Maslow, 1954).

TABLE 2

Number of Years a Respondent Has Worked in their Current Position

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
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Number of years in current position		
0-2	8	8
3-4	30	29
5-6	12	12
7-9	19	18
10-15	28	27
16 or more	6	6
TOTAL	103	100

Unemployment in Zimbabwe

Only eight employees have served their current employer for less than two years. The questionnaires indicated that of these, three were recent university graduates in their first job with the other five experienced professionals with post-graduate degrees. During face-to-face discussions, most employees expressed their reluctance to consider applying for new posts due to the high levels of unemployment in Zimbabwe, estimated at approximately 94 percent (Mapepa & Adekoye, 2019). Many people have left the country due to the brain drain and quest for better work opportunities abroad (Chetsanga & Muchenje, 2003). Due to the Zimbabwean economic climate context for this study, it is not easy to determine actual levels of loyalty by an employee to an organization as this was outside the research scope.

Job Selection

In part B of the questionnaire, questions one to five evaluated the employee's basis for selecting a job. There was an almost even positive versus negative response split as a combined 52 respondents, or 50 percent, strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that they selected their current jobs because they felt their principles were similar to those of the employer. A marginally equal number of 51 respondents somewhat or strongly disagreed with this statement. Most respondents appeared to have weak attachments to their current employer, as 70 percent strongly felt that they did not see themselves in the same job in the next five years. Most employees interviewed were content to stay in their current sector, which could be a result of being grateful to have any job because of existent high unemployment levels. The data may imply that despite some discontent with their current jobs, 93 (90 percent) respondents were not changing jobs frequently due to the poor economic environment.

Remuneration

Corresponding to what Maslow (1943) calls the self-actualization of needs, the research found that of the 39 employees aged 40 and above, most of them (90 percent) valued recognition of their achievements by the employer and the accompanying status in society of working for the UN or an INGO. This status includes being able to send children to private schools, external universities, owning multiple current model luxury vehicles, living in an upmarket suburb, or being able to travel outside of the country on family holidays, based on the face to face discussions. Conversely, of the 64 employees aged 39 and below, just under half (48 percent) shared a similar appreciation of employer recognition for their work achievements. In contrast, 52 percent of that age-group seemed to care more about cash-based remuneration only.

Type of Employment Contract

Most INGO and UN Fixed-term contracts have durations of two years and are renewable dependent on donor funding, continued need, and performance. Other contract types include

project-based temporary appointments of a defined duration, short-term consultancy contracts that do not exceed 11 months, and permanent or open-ended contracts. (UN HR Portal, 2015).

TABLE 3
Type of Employment Contract

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Employee's type of employment contract		
Fixed-term (secure funding, renewable)	50	49
Temporary (short-term project funding)	38	37
Short-term (up to 11 months)	15	14
Permanent / open-ended	0	0
TOTAL EMPLOYEES	103	100

During discussion sessions and interviews, all respondents felt that personal long-term plans are difficult to commit to due to short contract lengths. However, some discussion session respondents (45 percent) felt that shorter work contracts keep them motivated and inspired to maintain a high level of performance at all times to ensure the renewal of the employment contract.

Performance Evaluations

The questionnaire section on performance evaluations was one of the few parts within the questionnaire where respondents consistently chose to tick the indifferent "neither agree nor disagree" option on four of the five questions. Additional insight from the discussion session indicated a lack of appreciation of the benefits of a performance evaluation report. This trend appeared to mirror the initial negative perceptions of the performance review process in the research by Becker et al. (2011). The results indicated that employees feel that excellent performance is neither rewarded nor is poor work performance corrected.

Some negative respondent responses are summarized as follows:

- 88 percent do not find it easy to talk to their supervisor
- 88 percent do not value the employee/employer performance evaluation process
- 86 percent do not feel that their superior work performance is recognized
- 83 percent do not think that attempts to correct poor employee performance are adequate

As theorized by Bennis' and Deming's participatory approaches, the data suggest a poor perception of participatory approaches to managing employee and employer expectations and ease of communication with supervisors.

Training Initiatives

Around 76 percent of respondents confirmed that they have benefited from some form of work-based training and development in the past 12 months. Another 96 percent of respondents felt that workplace training programs encouraged them to work more effectively.

Career Development

Almost all staff (96 percent) appreciated opportunities to develop their skills through training initiatives. The researcher believes this is a consequence of Zimbabwe's high literacy levels of between 80 to 90 percent (UNFPA, 2018).

Promotion

Some respondents (91 percent) had low confidence in the prospects of promotion within their current organization. This research notes that some posts in the humanitarian sector reviewed are specifically designated for international professionals who must be recruited from other countries and should not be nationals of the host country (OHRM, 2009). Zimbabweans would similarly have to apply for such positions in other countries once they have reached management levels of their chosen career path. These international positions carry additional benefits, including:

- education grants for dependants up to university level,
- travel and housing allowances, and
- hardship allowances for those serving in unstable countries. Examples include countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia or Zimbabwe (UN HR Portal, 2015).

A hardship allowance mitigates the effects of food shortages, difficulty in accessing services, a general increased cost of living, and the need to travel more frequently for rest and recuperation or import goods for daily sustenance. Local employees, working in their country of citizenship, do not receive the hardship allowances. Cited as an encouraging factor during the discussion sessions, 93 percent of participants felt that they have an equal chance of applying for vacant jobs due to the policy of competitive recruitment for vacant positions (UN HR Portal, 2015b). In the UN, almost all appointments are competition-based, giving any qualified individuals equal access to apply to unfilled jobs (UN HR Portal, 2015b).

TABLE 4
Level of Education - Highest Qualification Held

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Highest qualification held		
Completion of high school (US GED diploma) only	2	2
Short post-school certificate, 2-year diploma	5	5
Extended post-school certificate, 2+-year diploma	24	23
Bachelors/Honors degree (equivalent to 3-year degree plus one-year research project)	43	42
Master's degree or higher	29	28
TOTAL EMPLOYEES	103	100

Level of Education – Highest Qualification Held

The table below shows a summary of the highest educational qualification attained by the 103 respondents who all hold a high school diploma. Additionally, 28 percent of respondents either had an additional post-high school vocational training certificate or a minimum two-year technical qualification. In comparison, 70 percent had at least a bachelor's, master's degree or higher. The more significant percentage of degree holders correlates with targeted public investments in education after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 (UNFPA, 2018).

Current Employment Grade or Level

The junior clerk to ~~senior~~ administrative assistant level jobs constitute about half of the respondent sample of this group, where 47 percent of the 51 respondents have a bachelor's degree. The table below indicates the number and percentage of employees employed at each grade level.

TABLE 5
Current Employee Grade or Level

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Employee grade level		
General services GS 1-4, or clerical jobs	4	5
General services GS 5-7, Admin Assistant jobs	51	50
Professional Officer NOA/NOB, junior manager	41	40
Professional Officer NOC/NOD, senior manager	4	5
Professional Officer NOE & above, Senior Manager	3	3
TOTAL EMPLOYEES	103	100

Financial and Non-financial Rewards

Non-financial benefits can be a decisive, motivating factor in employee performance management, together with other motivating provisions in the reviewed sector, such as maternity leave of a minimum of four months paid absence and four weeks for fathers or partners after adopting a child. The employee can choose to extend this initial maternity leave period up to one year, without penalty or risk of losing one's job, by using any available leave or vacation days and leave without pay (UN HR Portal, 2018). There are current discussions within the United Nations agencies, funds, and programs to further extend paid maternity leave from four to five months (UNICEF, 2019), and this sets a precedent in the nonprofit humanitarian sector in Zimbabwe that mirrors UN guidelines and staffing structures. In comparison, the standard maternity leave period according to local labor laws applicable to other work sectors in Zimbabwe is 98 calendar days (Zimbabwe Labour Act, 1985). Jobs and organizations in the industry reviewed that offer more generous maternity leave can be a motivating factor for some.

Unique Factors Affecting Employee Performance in Nonprofit Organizations

On analysis of the data collected, some common elements emerged that may affect employee performance in the nonprofit sector concerning the two research questions:

1. What are the unique factors that affect employee performance in nonprofit organizations?
2. What unique variables affect workers in the nonprofit sector?

These unique factors in the Zimbabwe context, as evaluated through this research are:

- a. The absence of regular merit-based job promotions for high performing individuals can negatively affect employees who feel they are not directly rewarded for excellent performance through promotion, since they have to apply and participate in a competitive recruitment process.
- b. Conversely, competitive recruitment can also ensure that qualified and high performing employees, especially those who have accentuated their qualifications through self-study, can apply and be considered for vacant positions that are available within the organization.
- c. There is a more significant opportunity for local staff to apply for international job assignments within the same organization with no interruption to base benefits and cumulative length of service.

Acceptance of Hypothesis

The hypothesis assumed that the performance of employees in the nonprofit sector is affected by and dependent on unique factors that apply more frequently in the nonprofit sector than

for-profit sectors in Zimbabwe. The three unique factors identified are: the lack of merit-based promotions, employees' ability to apply for any open position, and the possibility to work internationally in the same organization without losing any service benefits. No computerized statistical analysis tools were used in this niche industry research, allowing Human Resources personnel in the sector to relate to and apply the findings of this study easily. Under the context of this exploratory research, this hypothesis is accepted based on a review of common trends from the sample, using tables and charts for analysis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is hoped that this exploratory study can be used by HR Administrators in public or nonprofit organizations to do any of the following:

- i. Seek to understand various motivating factors for employees who work in the reviewed sector in Zimbabwe or other similar contexts.
- ii. Identify any barriers that prevent the organization from effectively nurturing efficient and highly skilled employees who contribute to public service policies or humanitarian programs for the benefit of their communities. These barriers could include a shortage of qualified persons due to the brain drain that is common in Africa or a lack of financial investment in human resources by the organization due to shrinking budgets.
- iii. Assist organizational leadership in creating a favorable environment for meaningful employee and organizational development. The conducive environment can be encouraged through exemplary leadership that creatively evaluates and accentuates general rewards and benefit policies. HR and Training Managers can advocate for an annual budget to offer free or reimbursable employer-supported training in core organizational skill areas that can help grow current employees for future or expanded job opportunities.

Specific Recommendations Based on Research Results

Arguably, each organization is unique in what they are feasibly able to implement to support performance management. The following list is not prescriptive, but a collection of recommendations may provide a mix of some inexpensive ways of motivating employees, as well as other long-term budget performance enhancement initiatives in the short- and long-term.

- A quick and affordable way is for organizations to encourage staff motivation by arranging annual or bi-annual ceremonies where certificates and small cash awards or vouchers with precise framed citations on the reason for the award. Such rewards can dovetail to a longer-term plan for exploring other meaningful social interactions outside of normal work activities.
- In the sector reviewed, it is common for some staff to be deployed for one to six months in other country offices within the same international organization. High performing staff can be considered for these job-secondments to gain international experience and exposure. Similarly, targeted leadership development initiatives for excellent employees with the potential to perform at even higher levels, introduced as a motivating tool for personal and professional development. Such opportunities could also benefit organizational preparedness for strategic succession planning.
- A participatory approach between employees and the organization can help in formulating strategic decisions that are more widely accepted, understood, and embraced.
- Poor performance must be highlighted during performance evaluations, counseled, and corrected as appropriate. Where it becomes necessary, protracted poor performance must be accompanied by firm actions that can result in suspension, loss of pay, or separation.

This research concluded that excellent performance that is not recognized is a demotivating factor, as does poor performance that remains uncorrected.

- Empowered employees take charge of their employment future by engaging in self-initiated study and professional development. A positive attitude, coupled with innate ability within the workplace, creates the kind of employee that every employer wants to have working for them. From experience, this researcher has found that a participatory approach where employees and employers discuss upcoming plans and see each other as partners nurtures employees to feel like they are a part of the organizations's successful future. Employees can have the space to seek out opportunities, gain new skills and grow professionally.

Given additional resources and the inclusion of in-depth statistical analysis tools like SPSS, the researcher would like to undertake a second survey and a series of comparative cross-sectional contextual studies in the future. The respondent pool would include a broader national sampling representation within the same sector for possible comparison against this baseline study. The research concluded that a holistic and multi-faceted approach is essential in addressing, mitigating, and where it is beneficial, accentuating the identified unique factors that affect employee performance in nonprofit organizations.

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Appendix

Employee Performance Questionnaire template (section headings were hidden in the actual survey)

Basic instructions: Select ONE option that best or closest describes what you feel. Please answer all the questions. Do not leave any questions blank.

Part A: Social and demographic data

Please tick or select ONE applicable option

1. Gender

FEMALE

MALE

2. Age

BELOW 25

26-30

31-39

40-49

50-59

OVER 60

3. Marital status

SINGLE

MARRIED

DIVORCED

SEPARATED

4. Which sector do you work in?

LOCAL/
INTERNATIONAL
NGO

GOVERNMENT/
MUNICIPAL
SECTOR

TRADE /
PROFESSIONAL
ORGANIZATION

PRIVATE
/ PROFIT
SECTOR

SELF-
EMPLOYED

UN-
EMPLOYED

5. How many years have you worked for your current employer?

0-2

3-4

5-6

7-9

10-15

OVER 16

6. How many employers have you worked for in the last 5 years ie since 2005?

CURRENT ONE

TWO

THREE

FOUR

FIVE OR MORE

7. My contract type is:

FIXED TERM
CONTRACT

TEMPORARY
CONTRACT

SHORT TERM
CONTRACT

PERMANENT /OPEN-
ENDED CONTRACT

8 My employment grade or level in my current position is:

GENERAL SERVICES (GS1-4) OR CLERICAL	GENERAL SERVICES (GS5-7) OR JUNIOR TO SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR	PROFESSIONAL OFFICER (NOA/NOB) OR JUNIOR MANAGER	PROFESSIONAL OFFICER (NOC/NOD) OR MIDDLE MANAGER	PROFESSIONAL OFFICER (NOE) & ABOVE OR SENIOR MANAGER &
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9 The highest qualification that I hold is:

ATTENDED PRIMARY OR HIGH SCHOOL, "O" or "A" LEVELS	SHORT POST-SCHOOL CERTIFICATE OR DIPLOMA (UP TO 2 YEARS DURATION)	LONG POST-SCHOOL DIPLOMA (AT LEAST 2 YEARS DURATION)	BACHELOR'S OR HONOURS DEGREE	MASTER'S DEGREE OR HIGHER
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Pick one response that immediately comes to mind.

PART B: JOB SELECTION	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR	SOMEWHAT AT	STRONGLY
1. I selected this job based of the accompanying non-cash benefits	1	2	3	4	5
2. I selected this job because my principles are similar to those of the employer	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am content to work in my current work sector	1	2	3	4	5
4. I see myself in this same job in the next 5 years	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have stayed in my current job because I choose to	1	2	3	4	5
PART C: REMUNERATION & BENEFITS					
6. I am motivated by the provision of non-cash based incentives	1	2	3	4	5
7. I do not mind what kind of work I am doing as long as I am paid for it	1	2	3	4	5
8. My contract type affects my level of motivation	1	2	3	4	5
9. The economy affects my satisfaction with my current salary level	1	2	3	4	5
10. In my organization, there is flexibility in the application of job grades and salary scales	1	2	3	4	5
PART D: PERSONNEL EVALUATION	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR	SOMEWHAT	STRONGLY

11.	Our organization's Personnel Evaluation Report is a good indicator of my performance	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Constructive feedback makes me work harder	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I find it easy to talk to my supervisor about my performance	1	2	3	4	5
14.	In my organization, superior work performance is rewarded	1	2	3	4	5
15.	In my organization poor employee performance is not tolerated	1	2	3	4	5
PART E: EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT						
16.	I feel that workplace training opportunities encourage me to work better	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I have benefited from work-based training and development in the last twelve months	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I am valued as a hardworking individual within my organization	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I am motivated by the prospect of promotion in the near future within my organization	1	2	3	4	5
20.	The country's economic and social challenges affect my personal development	1	2	3	4	5

What are the benefits, rewards and characteristics that are evident in your job sector? Tick as many options in each column that apply.

✓

INCREASING RESPONSIBILITY/ PROMOTION	COMMISSION PAY	BASIC SALARY	CHOICE IN OFFICE LOCATION	PRAISE FOR WORK WELL DONE
PERSONAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES	PERFORMANCE BONUSES	RETIREMENT BENEFITS	CHOICE IN OFFICE FURNISHINGS	COMPLIMENTS FOR ACHIEVEMENTS
MORE INTERESTING WORK	MERIT PAY	CAR ALLOWANCE	PERSONAL ASSIGNED PARKING	FRIENDLY GREETINGS/ ENVIRONMENT
AUTONOMY	INCENTIVE SCHEMES	MEDICAL AID	OWN SECRETARY	NON-OFFICIAL MEAL INVITATIONS
	ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS	THIRTEENTH CHEQUE	PUBLIC RECOGNITION	WORK SOCIAL GATHERINGS/ NETWORKING
	STOCK OWNERSHIP	SUBSIDISED CANTEEN	CONVENIENCE SERVICES ie	

				GYM, DAY CARE ROOM, CANTEEN		
		SHARE OPTIONS	SPONSORED VACATIONS			
			PROFIT SHARING			

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