# Predictors of organizational commitment: Evidence from non-governmental organizations in Zimbabwe

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The dynamic and harsh environment has led to high employee turnover as employees continue to search for greener pastures. This has pushed Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to look for ways to enforce employee commitment to their organizations. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence organizational commitment among employees of NGOs operating in Zimbabwe. Whilst organizational commitment and its determinants have been extensively researched through literature and in other academic platforms, there is dearth of research on organizational commitment in NGOs operating in developing countries, especially Zimbabwe. This cross-sectional study used a quantitative survey design. A survey was conducted in which 200 employees were randomly selected from Harare Province to participate in the study. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data which was then analyzed using descriptive, correlation and regression analyses. The results indicate that; employee empowerment, organizational support, employee relationships and teamwork are predictors of organizational commitment. The findings have implications to human resource managers of NGOs in Zimbabwe, who are advised to make efforts of supporting and empowering employees as well as enforcing teamwork and relationships among employees in order to ensure organizational commitment.

**Key words:** Organizational commitment, organizational support, employee empowerment, employee relationships, teamwork, NGOs

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational researchers and managers pay special attention to employees' organizational commitment based on the belief that organizations with committed employees achieve superior long-term performance (Fu et al. 2009). Given the dynamic and competitive environment, no organization can perform well unless if each employee is committed to the organization's objectives (Dordedic, 2004). The reason is that the performance of any organization is affected by how committed its workforce is to the organization. Therefore, nowadays, the most important sources of competitive advantage in organizations, is committed, motivated and conscientious employees (Goudarzvandchegini and Kheradmand, 2013). Employees that are not highly committed to the organization are most likely not going to perform well (Ghorbanhosseini, 2012). Low levels of employee commitment are associated with high turnover (Mowday, 1998). High employee turnover may be a source of competitive disadvantage because of recruitment and training costs (Morrow, 2011). In order to ensure that employees are committed to their organizations, it is imperative to know the drivers of employee commitment.

There are several factors that influence the commitment of employees to their organizations (Ghorbanhossein, 2012). Teamwork (Ghorbanhossein, 2012), employee relationship (Chinomona and Sandada, 2012), organizational support (Chinomona and Sandada, 2013), and employee empowerment (Naqvi et al. 2011) are some of them. NGOs in Zimbabwe that are seeking strategies to help improve organizational commitment in their workforce, should address these key factors. It has been noted that employee commitment is high in organizations where there is teamwork, where employees have good working relationship, where there is organizational support and where employees perceive that they are being empowered (Insan et al. 2013). Therefore, in order to ensure employee commitment, NGOs need to move from control oriented to committed-oriented work practices by addressing these factors (Bhatnagar, 2005). It is important for the non-governmental organizations in Zimbabwe to understand factors influencing organizational commitment so that they focus on ensuring that those factors that affect employee commitment are known. Other scholars

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such as Faisal et al., (2014) recommend that organizations that value commitment among their employees are able to motivate employees to be committed and hence engage in extra-role behaviors, such as creativeness or innovativeness. In the light of the professed importance of organizational commitment, it is therefore critical to establish the factors that influence organizational commitment in the NGOs sector.

#### 2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

A cross examination of the extant literature on the predictors of organizational commitment indicates that a lot of studies have focused on other sectors, in the developed western countries and Asia. No similar research has been undertaken in the NGO sector, as well as in the Sub-Saharan Africa developing countries like Zimbabwe. If this situation remains, NGOs in Zimbabwe will not be able to benefit from the factors that influence organizational commitment, as highlighted in literature. These firms will continue to be exposed to possibilities of failure, as a consequence of their failure to undertake organizational commitments. In turn, it will have a ripple effect on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and subsequently, the national economy of the country. Therefore, this presents an important research gap that warrants academic scrutiny. Against this background, the objective of this study was to determine the factors that influence employee organizational commitment in the NGO sector in Zimbabwe, in order to find ways for the firms in the sector to benefit in the running of their business operations and avoid the detriment possibilities of failure.

#### 3. OBIECTIVES

The overall objective of the study was to determine the factors that influence organizational commitment among Non-governmental employees.

The specific objectives were formulated as follows:

- To evaluate the influence of teamwork on employee organizational commitment;
- To investigate the influence of employee relationships on their commitment to the organization;
- To investigate the influence of organizational support on employee organizational commitment; and
- To evaluate the influence of employee empowerment on organizational commitment.

This study will contribute to the literature on organizational commitment by developing and testing a conceptual framework that shows how teamwork, employee relationships, organizational support and employee empowerment influence employee commitment. It will also provide some practical insights to NGOs and other sectors on how they can enhance employees' commitment to their respective organizations.

## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

## 4.1 The Social exchange theory

The social exchange theory, according to Emhan (2012) was proposed by Homans in 1958. The basic assumption of this theory is that organizations receive positive contributions from employees in exchange for providing benefits to their employees. When one person treats another well, the reciprocity norm obliges the return of favourable treatment (Mohammadi et al. 2014). To the extent that both the employee and the employer apply the reciprocity norm to their relationship, favourable treatment received by either party is reciprocated, leading to beneficial outcomes for both (Wikhamn & Hall 2012; Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005). Drawing from this social exchange theory, this study submits that employees in the NGOs operating in Zimbabwe become committed to their organisations if they perceive that there is organisational support, teamwork, employee empowerment and if there are good working relations with other employees.

# 4.2 Organizational commitment

According to Filstad (2011), organizational commitment is an attachment to the organization, characterised by an intention to remain in it, identification with the values and goals of the organization; and a willingness

to exert extra effort on its behalf. It is also defined as the behavioral intention or reaction, determined by the individual's perception of the normative pressure (Cohen, 2007). This behavioral aspect of organizational commitment is explained through calculative and normative commitments. The calculative or normative perspective refers to an employee's commitment to continue working for the organization based on the notion of weighing cost-benefits of leaving an organization (Filstad, 2011). In the same vein, Dordevic (2004) views organizational commitment as two-dimensional namely, affective and continuance. While affective commitment is a positive feeling of identification with, attachment to and involvement in the work organization, continuance commitment refers to the extent to which employees feel committed to their organization by virtue of the costs that they feel are associated with leaving. This suggests that there must be a relationship between the organization and its employees for the two to continue together (Dordevic 2004; Saeed et al. 2013).

#### 4.3 Teamwork

According to Ghorbanhossein (2013), a team is a working group which has all the conditions for a real team and its members are totally committed to each other's promotion and success. The authors further mention that one of the essential elements of a team is its focus toward a common goal and a clear purpose. This demonstrates that teams are an integral part of many organizations. According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), successful teamwork relies upon synergism existing between all team members creating an environment where they are all willing to contribute and participate in order to promote and nurture a positive, effective team environment. Team members must be flexible enough to adapt to cooperative working environments where goals are achieved through collaboration and social interdependence rather than individualized, competitive goals (Ghorbanhosseini, 2012).

## 4.4 Organizational Support

Dawley et al (2007) suggest that organizational support describes employees' beliefs that the organization values their contribution and well-being. Organizational support develops by meeting employees' socio-emotional needs and showing readiness to reward employees' extra efforts and to give help that would be needed by employees to do their jobs better. The benefits of perceived organizational support often are understood in reciprocal terms, an employee who sees the employer as supportive is likely to return the gesture (Cropanzano and Mitchell,2005). The more the organization treats its employees well, the more the employees respond well and care about the organization (Wikhamn and Hall 2012; Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005; Cohen and Veled-hecht 2010).

## 4.5 Employee Empowerment

Ali (2013) defines employee empowerment as a process of giving authority to the employees to make necessary important decisions on their own about their day to day activities. Empowered employees are expected to perform their work more effectively and efficiently than non-empowered employees. Empowerment according (Borghei et al., 2010) is a process which enables others to gain power, authority, and influence over others, institutions or society. This shows that for employees to perceive that they have been empowered, they should have decision-making of their own, having access to information and resources for taking proper decisions, ability to exercise assertiveness to collective decision making and having positive thinking on the ability to make change. According to Boudrias et al. (2009), employee empowerment is not only implemented to change employee cognitions, but also to foster proactive behaviours that could have an impact on organizational outcomes.

The notion of empowerment involves the workforce being provided with a greater degree of flexibility and more freedom to make decisions relating to work. The central tenet is that workers respond more creatively when given broad responsibilities, encouraged to contribute, and helped to derive satisfaction from their work (Greasley et al., 2008). Empowerment comes when the authority of the organizations makes decisions

and resolve organizational issues and to be delegated to subordinates so that they are able to increase employee flexibility and speed. It also comes with the assignment of responsibilities, and authority to employees, creating conditions for mutual trust between management and employees, involving employees in decision-making (Insan et al., 2013).

# 4.6 Employee Relationships

Employee relationships refer to an association between two interacting groups of employees (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). The authors proceed to mention that good employee relationships ensure that employees take care of each other and this produces effective work behaviour and positive employee attitudes. Employee relationships are therefore critical in ensuring a conducive working environment and hence an individual employee to be committed to other employees.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Teamwork has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment

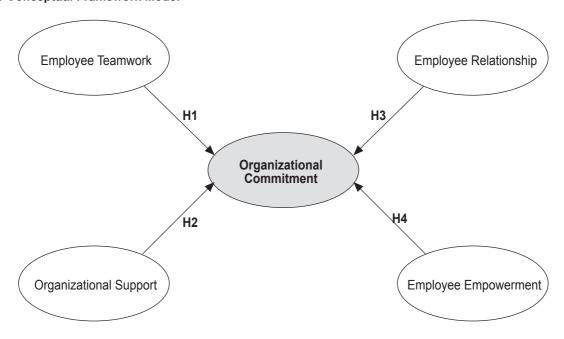
H2: Organizational support has a positive effect on organizational commitment

H3: Employee relationships have a significant positive effect on organizational commitment

H4: Employee empowerment has a positive effect on organizational commitment

Drawing from the extant literature on organizational behavior and Human Resources Management discussed above, and the Social Exchange theory, a conceptual framework was developed as depicted in Figure 1. The model is comprised of five constructs: four precursors (teamwork among employees, organizational support to employees, employee relationships and employee empowerment) and one outcome (organizational commitment). The study proposes that the identified precursors consequently result in commitment to the organization by employees.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework Model



#### 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

# 5.1 Strategy, population and sample

The research adopted the positivism philosophy. This was the paradigm that guided the data collection and analysis phases of the research project. The study also utilised the quantitative research approach as it was appropriate to quantify the cause and effect of teamwork, organisational support, employee empowerment and employee relationships on organisational commitment. A survey method through the use of structured questionnaires was adopted as a strategy to collect the data because it ensured economic data collection in a short space of time (Cohen et al, 2005). 200 employees in the NGOs in Harare were invited to participate in the study. The sample contained NGOs obtained from the National Association of Non-governmental Organisations (NANGO). A simple random sampling technique was used to come up with a sample from the sample frame (list of NGOs). It is a type of probability sampling technique where there is an equal chance (probability) of selecting each unit from the population being studied when creating a sample.

## 5.2 Data collection procedures

The employees were requested to complete a self-administered questionnaire that was distributed by research assistants. Of the 200 questionnaires that were distributed, 97 were returned and this resulted in a 49% response rate. Most of the respondents in the NGOs are found out of offices doing field work, a factor which reduced the response rate.

#### 5.3 Instrumentation

The scale items for the constructs were adapted from validated scales of previous similar studies. Allen and Meyer's (2000) instrument was adapted for the organizational commitment construct, Lurie, Schultz and Lamanna (2011) for the teamwork construct, Chinomona and Sandada (2013) for employee relationships construct, Chinomona and Sandada (2014) for the organizational support construct and Hayes (1994) for the employee empowerment construct. The items were modified to make sure they measure the relevant constructs. The five point Likert scale was used where "strongly disagree" = 1, "disagree" = 2, "Neutral" = 3, "Agree" = 4, and "Strongly agree" = 5.

# 5.4 Data analysis

The data analysis consisted of inspecting the questionnaires for completeness and correctness of the information captured. Data was entered into SSPS statistical software package and an examination of descriptive responses done according to frequency distributions and descriptive statistics. Correlation analyses were performed to assess the degree of association between variables under study. Multiple regression analysis was also conducted so as to identify the extent to which the variables under study influenced firm performance.

## 5.5 Reliability and validity measures

The internal consistency reliability of the instrument was tested by computing Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. An overall value of 0.903 was achieved which is greater than the acceptable benchmark of 0.60 (Saunders, 2009). The reliability of each scale in the study was checked. As shown in Table 1, all the scales yielded an alpha value greater than 0.6, teamwork (0.807), organisational support (0.763), employee relations (0.824), employee empowerment (0.793) and organisational commitment (0.850), which implies that the scales for all the constructs were reliable. The content validity of the instrument was censured by consulting subject experts to review the instrument and also by conducting a pilot study with a few employees to check for adequacy and clarity validity of the instrument. The results of the study were then used to improve the instrument by making adjustments to some questions that lacked clarity. Table 1 depicts the internal reliability of the scales.

**Table 1 Reliability statistics** 

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha value
Team work	7	0.807
Organisational support	7	0.763
Employee relations	6	0.824
Employee empowerment	7	0.793
Organisational commitment	9	0.850
Overall Cronbach's Alpha	43	0.903

## 6. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

# 6.1 Sample distribution

The gender profile of the respondents revealed that male respondents (n=57 constituting 59%), were more than female respondents (n=40 constituting 41%) of the total respondents. With regard to the respondents' age, most of the employees (n=39; 40%) are aged between 26-30 years, (n=22; 23%) are aged between 21-25 years, followed by the age group between 31-35 years (n=21; 22%), whilst a few employees 8% were aged between 41-45 years with the last 7% being constituted by those aged between 36-40 years. The age distribution results are almost skewed towards between 20 and 35 years. This age group is representative of the general working class in Zimbabwe, especially in the NGOs. These organisations require young adults who can do field work more than mature adults who will be having more responsibilities to consider. In terms of employment type in the NGOs, the greater number of employees (n =83) constituting 86% are on contract type of employment, whilst (n=13) constituting 13% are employed as permanent workers and one of the respondent constituting 1% did not provide the employment type. Responses regarding the current position were as follows: Senior manager (n=6; 6%), junior manager (n=16; 16%), officer (n=68; 70%), general hand (n=7; 7%). In terms of the educational background of the respondents, the results indicate that most of them (n=41; 43%) have attained degrees as their highest qualification, followed by those with diplomas (n=25; 26%), those with post graduate degrees (n=17; 18%), those with ordinary level (n=6; 6%), those with advanced level (n=5; 5%), and lastly those with certificates (n=3; 3%). The qualifications result is skewed towards degrees as most NGOs do employee personnel from university graduates as field officers, with a few in other departments such as health would have diplomas in their relevant fields.

## 6.2 Correlation analysis

The results from the correlations were examined using the Spearman's rank correlation "rho". This was necessitated by the fact that the sample data was non parametric. The Spearman's correlation is a non-parametric rank-based statistical test for unevenly distributed data (Babin, Kruger and Griffin, 2009). It was used because the data was ranked and not normally distributed. The correlation takes a range from -1.0 for a perfect negative relationship to +1.0 for a perfect positive relationship (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005). The level of association between independent variables and the dependent variable employee organisational commitment are shown in the Table 2 below.

**Table 2 Correlation Analysis Results** 

Factors	1	2	3	4	5
Team work 1	1				
Organisational support 2	.730**	1			
Employee relations 3	.645**	.612**	1		
Employee empowerment 4	.600**	.767**	.584**	1	
Organisational commitment 5	.472**	.637**	.412**	.542**	1

<sup>\*\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the results in Table 2, it was observed that relationships between team work and organisational commitment (r=.472), organisational support and organisational commitment (r=0.637, employee relations and organisational commitment (r=0.412), employee empowerment and organisational commitment (0.542) are positive at p<0.01, demonstrating that all the four predictors are significantly correlated to organisational commitment.

## 6.3 Regression analysis

Having analysed the results of correlations between the variables, the researcher went on further to conduct a regression analysis since the correlation analysis simply measures the strength of a relationship whilst it does not determine the predictive relationship between the variables. In order to determine how teamwork, organisational support, employee relations and employee empowerment- as the independent variables, predict the employee organisational commitment- which is the dependent variable, a regression analysis model was computed using the multiple regression analysis. Table 3 shows the results from the regression analysis showing the predictive power of each factor on employee organisational commitment.

Table 3. Regression between the independent variables and organisational commitment

Independent Variables	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
(Constant)	.684		0.786	.435
Team work	.180	0.143	1.824	.189
Organisational support	.194	0.655	4.581	.000*
Employee relations	.213	0.412	2.514	.030*
Employee empowerment	.242	0.458	2.339	.010*

R=0.658; R Square = 0.433; Adjusted R Square = 0.408; F = 17.543. \* significant at p<0.05

The results shown in Table 3 reflect that the goodness of fit is satisfactory with an Adjusted R Square = 0.408. This implies that the factors that influence employee organisational commitment in the non-governmental sector in Zimbabwe such as teamwork, organisational support, employee relations and employee empowerment explain about 41% of the variance in employee organisational commitment as indicated by the predictive power coefficient of 0.408. Therefore, about 59% of employee organisational commitment remains unexplained.

The beta coefficients reveal that organisational support to employees is generally more powerful and most significant in explaining the contributions of the factors to employee organisational commitment (?=0.655, p<0.01), followed by employee empowerment (?=0.458, p<0.05) and employee relations (?=0.412, p<0.05). However, teamwork (?=0.143 p>0.05) showed an insignificant result but with a positive contribution to the employee commitment.

## 7. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

These results from the sample statistics could possibly be explained by the assertions of Aube (2007), Soetanto (2008), Morrow (2008) and Armstrong (2012), who recommended that organisational support, teamwork, employee relations and employee empowerment are critical in ensuring employee organisational commitment. This supports the findings of other researchers like Ghorbanhosseini (2013). Individuals are likely to commit themselves to a team and consequently, to an organization that fosters teamwork. Ucar and Otken (2012), Cropanzo and Mitchell (2005) and Mohammadi et al (2014), also found a positive relationship between organizational support and organizational commitment. The assertion that employee relations within the organization leads to organization commitment, is also supported by studies carried out by researchers such as Ahmed (2012), Filstad (2011), Nguyen et al (2014), and Dordevic (2004). Therefore, the three hypotheses, H2, H3 and H4 are supported as they positively influence organisational commitment, while H1 is rejected.

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This study provides valuable information to management in the non-governmental sector in Zimbabwe. It provides insights in areas of concentration in matters that aim to improve employee commitment in organizational performance.

## 8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research was conducted with a target of 200 respondents in Harare alone, because of time and cost challenges. Some potential respondents could not be accessed in the study time because of their nature of field work

## 9. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher proposes the following as possible areas for further studies. Studies that encompass more respondents and covering a wider area (beyond the capital city of Harare), may be more representative and could yield different results. More time and financial resources for accessing all the potential informants should also be considered. It may also be of good benefit if another study can be done in Zimbabwe to compare the effects in the non-profit making organization and those in the profit making organization and establish if the same conclusions can be drawn.

#### 10. CONCLUSION

The results from the analysis supported all the four hypotheses, showing high correlations between the individual factors which are independent variables and employee organisational commitment as the dependent variable. It is in line with the basic assumption of the social exchange theory (Emhan, 2012), the two-dimensional notion of organizational commitment (Dordevic, 2004), cooperative working environment for collaboration and social interdependence in teamwork (Ghorbanhosseini, 2012) and others. However, it was also noted from the findings that organisational support to employees has much influential power in predicting the employee organisational commitment of employees in the NGO sector in Zimbabwe, whilst teamwork had the lowest level of influence in the sector. All the factors under study indicated a positive level of correlation with the employee commitment in the NGO sector in Zimbabwe. The hypotheses were all accepted as they were deemed to have a positive influence on employee organisational commitment. The conclusion drawn from this study is that teamwork, organizational support, employee relations and employee empowerment in the NGO sector in Zimbabwe, have a positive effect on their commitment to organizations which they work for.

## 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst all the factors may have a positive influence on organizational commitment, the results infer that some factors have a stronger impact than others. Therefore, given the limitation of financial resources in Zimbabwe, it could be recommended that to enhance organizational commitment, organizations may prioritize to implement the factors that have a high impact namely, organizational support and employee empowerment. The findings do not mean that NGOs should overlook the other two factors (teamwork and employee relationships). It is critical for NGOs to enforce all the factors and then identify which factors could need more attention within the organization. It is important for an organization to identify which factors lead to organizational commitment among the employees because corrective actions can be taken to enhance and monitor organizational commitment. In terms of the regression analysis results, organizational support and employee empowerment are the most important predictors to ensure organizational commitment. This means that management should make sure that employees are supported through various means. In the same vein, management should also ensure that employees are empowered as this enhances their commitment to the organization.

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