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Factors associated with organizational commitment of academic employees in Botswana

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Organizational commitment is a major determinant of organizational effectiveness and desirable employee attitudes and behaviours. Highly committed academic staff are the backbone of universities since they play an important role in the success of their institutions. This study investigated factors associated with organizational commitment among academic employees of a university in Botswana using a representative sample of 165 respondents. The study also sought to develop a parsimonious model that can predict organizational commitment among academic employees in Botswana. The results show that about 3 out of 5 academic employees sampled showed evidence of commitment to the university, regardless of their socio-demographic or socio-economic background. The study found 11 factors that were associated with commitment to the university. Most of the factors that affected organizational commitment involved decisions and actions that were directly or indirectly at the disposal and control of the management. The single most important factor that predicted commitment to the university was acceptance of the new criteria for the assessment of academic staff, followed by perception of opportunities for research.

Key words: Organizational commitment, academic employees, management, university, Botswana.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational commitment has been identified as an important human factor which is a major determinant of organizational effectiveness (Alsiewi and Agil, 2014), school effectiveness (Dou et al., 2017) and intrinsic

motivation which helps to stimulate university teachers to perform actions for achieving desired results (Ahluwalia and Preet, 2017). Organizational commitment has become increasingly topical in an environment of

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resource scarcity and cutback management (Chordiya et al., 2017), which have resulted in challenges of attracting and retaining high-quality employees, and sustaining employee morale, motivation and performance (Fako et al., 2014). It is one of the most fundamental concepts that have been explored in relation to workforce motivation and productivity (Tolentino, 2015).

The commitment of employees is at the heart of human resources management (HRM) practice (Gbadamosi et al., 2007), the achievement of organizational goals (Khalili and Asmawi, 2012) and the success of many organizations (Yavuz, 2010). Lack of employee commitment results from a negative psychosomatic consequence that can accrue when individuals perceive poor congruence between themselves and their environment (Southcombe et al., 2015), which can result in turnover and attrition (Joiner and Bakalis, 2006; Meyer et al., 2002).

While turnover rates can be beneficial by opening doors for new talent and new ideas, high turnover rates are disruptive to an organization. High turnover rates can lead to loss of work progress, productivity, profits, organizational reputation and the attrition of the relationship built with customers (Alzubi, 2018). High turnover rates can increase the cost of recruitment, training and retention of staff (Al-Hussami, 2008), as well as negatively affect organizational effectiveness and success, ability to achieve strategic objectives, ability to maintain competitive advantage, and ability to maintain the morale, productivity and quality of work of those who remain in the organization (Alzubi, 2018).

While the ability to attract, retain and develop competent employees is important for all organizations, it is amplified for universities due to their reliance on the knowledge and skills of their academic employees (Alvesson, 2004), the complexity and ambiguity of academic work (Benson and Brown, 2007), the global demand for and shortages of quality academics, the aging academic work force and the high costs associated with replacing competent academic staff (Southcombe et al., 2015). Though employees are the most priceless assets of an organization (Voon et al., 2011), academic employees are the backbone of universities; and high turnover rates among academic employees have detrimental effects on the development of universities (Li et al., 2017), student learning and achievement (McInerney et al., 2015) and the image of the academic sector in general (Alzubi, 2018). Since highly committed academic staff play an important role in the success of any tertiary institution (Ahmad et al., 2017), managers of higher education institutions seeking competitive advantage need to understand the organizational commitment of academic employees to their universities and the factors associated with such commitment.

Conceptual framework

Organizational commitment refers to the affiliation and

involvement of an employee with his/her organization (Steers, 1977). It is a psychological state that characterizes an individual's relationship with an organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Commitment to an organization is a positive psychosomatic consequence that can be realised when individuals perceive good congruence between themselves and their organizational environment (Kim 2012; Li et al., 2017), believe in the organization's vision and values, desire to stay in the organization, and want to contribute to it (Meyer and Allen, 1997).

Organizational commitment of university academic employees implies their considerable identification and involvement with the university (Markovits et al., 2010), a belief in and acceptance of the university's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the university and loyalty or a strong desire to maintain membership in the university (Mowday et al., 1979; Porter and Steers, 1982). It also implies a good person-organization fit that should result in willingness to do work that is consistent with and promotes the reason for the existence or purpose for which the university was established.

Understanding the commitment of academic employees to the university is important in the context of the tendency for academic employees to have a strong orientation and commitment to the occupation or profession rather than to the organization (Joo, 2010). In any event, the organizational and professional commitment of academic employees may not necessarily be incompatible. Commitment to the profession has been positively associated with intrinsic motivation to engage in research, and with greater research productivity (Becker et al., 2017). Research productivity is consistent with academic employees' desire to be well-connected and well positioned within his/her profession (professional commitment). This can provide unique opportunities for success that can translate to organizational access to high-potential employees, institutional visibility (Perry et al., 2016) and enhanced reputation that should benefit the institution.

The commitment of employees to their work place has, historically, had three distinguishable, yet related dimensions referred to as affective, normative and continuance commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Meyer et al., 2002). Using Meyer and Allen's (1991) model, Ling et al. (2002) established a five-dimensional model of organizational commitment, which include affective commitment, normative commitment, ideal commitment, economic commitment and choice commitment. Affective commitment is an employee's emotional attachment to, psychological bond (Buchanan, 1974; Prinvale, 2001) with social attachment to (Still, 1983), identification with, and involvement in the organisation (Meyer and Allen, 1997). It is an attitude or orientation towards an organization which links or attaches the identity of the employee to the organisation (Sheldon, 1971) and absorbs the individual's fund of affectivity (Kanter, 1968).

It involves the congruence of individual values with values of the organisation (identification). It also involves feelings of care for, pride in, devotion and dedication to the organisation, as well as willingness to make sacrifices for the good of the organisation (involvement), and to maintain membership in the organization (loyalty) (Gbadamosi et al., 2007; Liou, 2008; Mowday et al., 1979).

Normative commitment is based on a moral obligation (Meyer and Allen, 1997) to remain an employee of the organization as a result of internalization of normative pressures (Gbadamosi et al., 2007), a sense of guilt resulting from thoughts about leaving the organisation (Fako et al., 2014), a desire to compensate favours received from the organisation (Joolideh and Yeshodhara, 2009), or perceived expectation to reciprocate specific benefits to an organisation (Mercurio, 2015). Continuance commitment involves an instrumental calculation (Matthieu and Zajac, 1990) of the relative benefits that an employee associates with staying in the organization against the costs of leaving the organisation (Becker, 1960; Mercurio, 2015). Continuance commitment is the result of economic decisions and rationale motivated by investment of individual resources and anticipation of subsequent rewards (Becker, 1960). It is a "marriage of convenience" that is driven by enlightened self-interest (Fako et al., 2014) and consideration of what the individual would lose if they left the organization (Hosgorur et al., 2017). According to Zhang et al. (2017) ideal commitment refers to the employee's realization of their occupational ambitions; economic commitment arises from anxiety over a financial shortfall that may result from leaving one's job, while choice commitment is rooted in one's lack of confidence in finding a job. Economic commitment and choice commitment are a refinement of continuance commitment (Zhang et al., 2017).

Purpose of the study

Although in recent years, the concept of organizational commitment has been receiving much attention from higher education researchers (Zhang et al., 2017), most research on organisational commitment has been carried out among private sector business organisations (Lovakov, 2016). Few studies have been developed in the public sector, particularly in higher education institutions (Rafael et al., 2017). Research on organisational commitment of academic employees in the African continent is rather limited (Fakoet al., 2014). This study explores the prevalence of organizational commitment among academic employees, factors that have been reported as correlates of organizational commitment (Wang et al., 2010; Meyer and Allen, 1991; Lam and Liu, 2014; Schoemmel and Jønsson, 2014) and variables that can be used to predict organizational commitment among academic employees in Botswana and use these factors

to develop a parsimonious predictive model of organizational commitment.

Understanding the commitment that academic employees feel towards their institution is important given that it is linked with their performance and willingness to do more (Jing and Zhang, 2014; Plattner, 2004), student learning and achievement (McInerney et al., 2015), the achievement of organizational goals (Khalili and Asmawi, 2012) and the institution's overall success (Lovakov, 2016). The commitment of academic employees to universities is important in the context of reduced government funding in recent decades, increased pressure for efficient management and self-financing of public institutions, demand for academic employees to engage in work activities that go beyond teaching and research, to include attracting research and other funds to the university (Rafael et al., 2017). The study should be of practical interest to managers of higher education institutions seeking competitive advantage by understanding the importance of the organizational commitment of academic employees to their universities as well as the factors associated with such commitment in an African context. The study should also advance scholarly understanding of associations and relationships between organizational commitment and independent variables.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study adopted a quantitative non-experimental design using a survey instrument. The data collection instrument was a cross-sectional, self-administered questionnaire. Participants were selected from a population of academic employees with officially allotted office space at the University of Botswana (UB), and whose names appeared in the University telephone directory. The study population was stratified into enumeration units corresponding to academic units with an average size of approximately nine (9) academic employees per unit. Between two (2) and three (3) academic staff were selected randomly from each enumeration unit. The questionnaire was distributed over a period of two weeks, during which follow-ups were made by research assistants to collect completed questionnaires. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Respondents were treated anonymously, and the identity of individual respondents was not used at any stage of the analysis of the data. A cover letter affixed to the questionnaire, explained the nature and purpose of the study, and assured respondents that the information they provided would be dealt with ethically. Participant observation and involvement in virtually all formal structures of the university enabled the research team to place the study in historical context. The research protocol and instruments were approved by the University of Botswana Human Subjects Review Board.

Measurement of organizational commitment

Organizational commitment was measured with 18 items adopted from Suliman and Lles (2000). Respondents were invited to express the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each statement using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 =

strongly agree. The minimum score possible was 18 and the maximum score was 90, with higher summed scores indicating higher levels of commitment. The wording of some questions were reversed so that a response of strongly agree indicated low organizational commitment. Reversed items included; 'I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to UB', 'I do not feel "emotionally attached" to UB' and 'I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to UB'. The measure of organizational commitment was found to be reasonably reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$).

Measurement of other variables

The questionnaire included self-report items that measured personality attributes, work performance, coping with work, job satisfaction, stress, burnout, support at work, attachment to supervisor, and reaction to organizational changes. Personality attributes measured included internal locus of control, external locus of control, self-efficacy and hope. Six items adopted from Agho et al. (1992) were used to measure job satisfaction. Two of the items were 'My job is like a hobby to me', 'I find real enjoyment in my work'. Occupational stress was measured by three items that assessed employees' frequency of stress, amount of stress and sickness symptoms. Burnout was assessed with six items. Support at work was measured with 3 items while coping habits were measured with six items. Twelve items were used to determine attitudes to change. Examples of items included: 'The WebCT will improve the quality of teaching and learning at UB'; 'The semesterization policy is working well at UB'; and 'Things are generally getting better at UB'. Respondents were invited to express the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each statement using a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 strongly agree. The scales used to measure the different variables demonstrated good reliability (Cronbach's alpha (α) ranged between 0.83 and 0.89).

Measurement of background variables

Individual background variables such as gender, age, marital status, number of dependent children, citizenship, educational level, organizational tenure and annual salary were also included. Gender was measured by responses to a questionnaire item that asked respondents to indicate the gender category to which they belonged: male and female.

Age categories were determined by asking respondents to choose the age category to which they belonged from among nine categories ranging from 29 years and younger to 65 years and older. Marital status was determined by asking respondents to choose a category that best described their marital status from six choices (single, cohabiting, married, divorced, widowed and other). Respondent's number of dependent children was determined by asking respondents to state the number of dependent children they had with categories ranging from no dependent children to 4 or more dependent children.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they were citizens of Botswana or citizens of other countries. They were also asked to indicate the academic faculty (an academic administrative unit with a group of related academic disciplines) in which they worked and the number of years they had worked for the University of Botswana as academic staff. Level of education was determined by asking respondents to choose a category that best described their highest academic qualifications. Annual salary was measured by asking respondents to choose from one of the five applicable salary bands (Bands 4 to 8) that best described their annual salary. Respondents were also asked to indicate their academic rank among the choices: professor, associate professor, senior lecturer,

lecturer and assistant lecturer.

Data analysis

For the purposes of data analyses, organizational commitment was converted to a binary variable: 1= committed and 0=not committed. Participants who "agreed" with positively worded statements were regarded as having organizational commitment towards the university, while participants who "disagreed" were regarded as not having organizational commitment. All items were recoded as categorical variables on a Likert scale.

Bivariate analyses were conducted to determine the set of factors that were significantly associated with organizational commitment using Chi-squared tests of association between organizational commitment and independent variables. Only factors that had a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) associations with organizational commitment were discussed and later included in a hierarchical multiple logistic regression procedure to determine a parsimonious model for predicting organizational commitment, and for determining the relative odds-ratios associated with each factor in line with procedures described by Aggestri (2000), Powers and Xie (2000) and Lawal (2003). The variables retained from the bivariate analysis were imputed into the model successively using the conditional log likelihood procedure. The percentage of employees correctly reclassified by the fitted model was used as a measure of goodness of fit. Logistic regression was used to model categorical response variables and predictive factors of organizational commitment.

RESULTS

A total of 165 questionnaires were fully completed and used in the study. Majority (71.5%) of the respondents were male. Most of them (81%) were aged 40 years or older, 72.1% were married and 63.0% were citizens of Botswana. More than half (57.3%) were employed on a pensionable basis while the rest (42.7%) were employed on a renewable fixed-term contract typically held by non-citizens and citizen-employees beyond the compulsory retirement age of 65 years for stints of two-to-five years at a time, in line with university policy. Their academic ranks included: assistant lecturer (2%), lecturer (45%); senior lecturer (34%), associate professor (9%) and professor (10%). Most of them (67.0%) had a doctoral degree.

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by independent factors. Majority (90.9%) had internal locus of control. A large proportion (78.2%) had a sense of personal efficiency and 76.4% had a sense of accomplishment. Most of the respondents (84.2%) had some publications, 69.1% believed that the quality of the teaching and learning environment was good, and 57.6% believed that the evaluation of teaching by students was acceptable to them.

Although, most respondents (61.3%) were satisfied with their jobs, a large proportion (70.4%) believed that the status of academic staff at the university had declined in recent years. A similarly high proportion (69.1%) did not agree with the university mission statement about the university being a leading centre of academic excellence in Africa and the world, and 63% did not agree with the

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by independent factors.

S/N	Factor	Type of response (%)	
		Positive response	Negative response
1.	Contributing to policy making	44.8	55.2
2.	Responding to emails	50.9	49.1
3.	Perception of the status of academics	67.9	32.1
4.	Satisfaction with the management	35.2	64.8
5.	Perception of opportunities for research	49.1	50.9
6.	Perception of the working habits of students	46.7	53.3
7.	Sense of personal efficiency	78.2	21.8
8.	Satisfaction with the job	61.3	38.7
9.	Sense of accomplishment	76.4	23.6
10.	Acceptance of mission statement	30.9	69.1
11.	Internal locus of control	90.9	9.1
12.	The quality of the management	40.0	60.0
13.	Acceptance of evaluations by students	57.6	42.4
14.	Support from administrative staff	55.8	44.2
15.	The quality of the academic environment	69.1	30.9
16.	Perception of the abilities of students	72.1	27.9
17.	Desire for a managerial job	31.5	68.5

new assessment criteria for the appointment, promotion and review of academic staff. It is interesting to note that 64.8% of the respondents were not satisfied with the university management, 60% believed that the quality of the university management was not good, 57% did not agree with the proposed restructuring of the academic organisation of the university that was spearheaded by the management team, and 55.2 percent of the respondents reported that they did not contribute to policy making at the university. In addition to being critical of management, most respondents (68.5%) did not have aspirations for a managerial job.

Organizational commitment and independent factors

The results show that almost three (3) out of every five (5) of the academic employees sampled (59.8%) showed commitment to the university as an organization. Several factors that were investigated were found to have no significant statistical association ($p > 0.05$) with organizational commitment to the university, and were not included in further analyses. These factors included socio-demographic variables such as gender, age-group, marital status, number of dependent children and citizenship status and socio-economic variables such as income group, rank and organizational tenure. The factors also included: personality dispositions such as internal locus of control, self-efficacy and helpfulness; aspects of workload and work performance such as course load, student load, coping with work, work and home conflict, sense of accomplishment, research output perceived level of performance, perceived level of

efficiency and sense of initiative.

There were also no significant relationships between organizational commitment and support from co-workers, support from supervisors and from administrative support staff. Personal discipline and coping strategies such as writing down plans for the day, frequency of exercise, maintenance of a healthy diet, taking food supplements, putting in extra time, responding to e-mails were not significantly associated with organizational commitment. Work-related attitudes such as acceptance of the organizational mission statement, acceptance of student evaluation of courses and teaching, perception of the status of academic staff, acceptance of performance management systems (PMS), attitude toward E-Learning, attitude toward semesterization (that is, course offerings were semester-long as opposed to year-long), and perception of the quality of the teaching and learning environment had no significant relationship with organizational commitment. There was also no significant association between organizational commitment and the amount of work-related stressor frequency of reported stress.

Factors associated with organizational commitment

The study found a significant association ($X^2=4.962$, $df=1$, $p=0.026$) between frequency of absenteeism to cope with work and organizational commitment. Most of those who were hardly ever absent (65.5%) showed commitment to the university as compared to only 47.1% who were frequently absent from work. The study found

Table 2. Bivariate associations between organizational commitment and independent factors.

S/N	Independent variable	Chi-square	df	p-value
1.	Acceptance of the criteria for the assessment of academic staff	9.695	1	0.002
2.	Perception of opportunities for research	8.968	1	0.003
3.	Satisfaction with the university management	8.316	1	0.004
4	Perception of the quality of the university management	7.509	1	0.006
5	Aspirations for a managerial job	5.858	1	0.016
6	Acceptance of academic restructuring	5.697	1	0.017
7	Adequacy of consultation by the management	5.114	1	0.024
8	Working habits of students	5.006	1	0.025
9	Frequency of absenteeism	4.962	1	0.026
10	Job satisfaction	4.045	1	0.045
11	Contribution to policy making	3.961	1	0.047

ten (10) factors that had a significant inverse association ($p \leq 0.05$) with organizational commitment. These factors included: (1) acceptance of the criteria for the assessment of academic staff, (2) perception of opportunities for research, (3) satisfaction with the university management, (4) perception of the quality of the university management, (5) aspirations for a managerial job, (6) acceptance of academic restructuring, (7) adequacy of consultation by the management, (8) perception of the working habits of students, (9) job satisfaction and (10) contribution to policy making (Table 2).

Commitment to the university was shown by most of them that: (1) rejected the new criteria for the assessment of academic staff (68.9%), (2) believed that the university did not have adequate opportunities for research and scholarship (71.1%), (3) were not satisfied with the university management (67.9%); had a negative perception of the quality of management (68.4%), (4) had no desire for a managerial job (66.1%), (5) rejected the proposed restructuring of the academic organization of the university (67.7%), (6) felt that the management did not adequately consult with employees (65.0%), (7) felt that students had poor working habits (67.8%), (8) did not report signs of burnout (67.9%), (9) were not satisfied with their jobs (69.8%), and (10) had not contributed to policy making (61.2%).

Predictive model for organizational commitment to the university

Out of the 11 factors that had a significant association with organizational commitment to the university, only three were retained in the parsimonious predictive model. These were: (a) acceptance of the new criteria for the assessment of academic staff, (b) perception of opportunities for research and (c) frequency of absenteeism.

The percentage of respondents correctly classified as showing or not showing organizational commitment was

64.4% when acceptance of the new criteria for the assessment of academic staff was the only predictor in the model. When perception of opportunities for research was added as a factor, the percentage of cases correctly classified increased to 68.1%. Interestingly, however, there was a reduction to 64.4 % when frequency of absenteeism was added as an additional factor in the predictive model.

The model predicts that an academic employee who rejected the new criteria for assessment of academic staff was more than two-and-a-half times (odds= 2.522) as likely to have organizational commitment to the university as one who accepted the new criteria for the assessment of academic staff. An academic employee who felt that opportunities for research were inadequate was more than twice (odds=2.305) as likely to have organizational commitment to the university as one who felt that opportunities for research were adequate. An academic employee who was hardly ever absent to cope with work was more than twice (odds = 2.180) likely to have organizational commitment to the university as one who was frequently absent to cope with work.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to establish the extent to which academic employees showed organizational commitment to the university, and explored the relationship between several independent factors and organizational commitment, including employee perceptions of the university management and work outcomes that can be influenced by the management. The study further sought to develop a parsimonious model that can predict organizational commitment among academic employees in an institution of higher learning in Botswana.

This study found that three-out-of-five academic employees showed commitment to the university and were willing to do work which represented the reason for the existence or purpose of the university as an

organization. It has been noted that highly committed academic staff play an important role in the success of any tertiary institution (Ahmad et al., 2017). Identification and involvement with the university seemed to reduce burnout (indicated by emotional indifference) as a result of prolonged work-related stress. Those who did not report signs of burnout showed organizational commitment to the university.

Majority of the academic employees that participated in the study had internal locus of control, which is a belief that they could influence events and their outcomes, and did not tend to blame outside forces. Most of them were hardly ever absent from work. Most were satisfied with their jobs, and always responded to e-mail communication. They also believed that the status of academics at the university was good although they felt that it had declined in recent years. They felt that administrative staff gave adequate support to academic staff, the quality of the teaching and learning environment was good, and the evaluation of teaching by students was acceptable. They also felt that university students had the ability to do well, however, they felt that students did not have good working habits.

The single most important factor that predicted the organizational commitment of academic staff emerged to be acceptance of the new criteria for the assessment of academic staff. The findings show that most respondents rejected the new assessment criteria. Those who rejected the new assessment criteria were more likely to show commitment to the university than those who accepted the new assessment criteria. The revised criteria for the assessment of academic employees resulted in many feeling unsettled and that goal posts were shifted and requirements increased just as many had resigned to accepting the then existing (old) requirements, and some had met or were about to meet the requirements. It has been shown that criteria for assessment are regarded by most people in the academic profession as essential conditions of employment or reciprocal exchange (psychological contract), whose change may be regarded as a breach of the psychological contract upon which their organizational commitment was based (Obeng and Ugboro, 2017). Although perceptions of breach of the reciprocal exchange may elicit feelings of betrayal, which in turn may have negative impacts on desired work behaviours, this study found that such perceptions did not have a negative impact on organizational commitment.

The second most important factor that predicted organizational commitment of academic employees was perception of opportunities for research. Many seem to have regarded their responsibilities as revolving primarily around teaching and research; and considered service, administrative duties and managerial positions as largely peripheral, if not contrary, to their primary reason for working at the university. The time they would spend contributing to policy making would involve undesirable administrative and political detraction from academic work

(preparing for teaching) and scholarly work of conducting research and preparing manuscripts for publication.

Research output was one of the core requirements for promotion to senior academic ranks and for retention of employees through the renewal of their fixed-term contracts. It was also consistent with the ideal of maintaining high academic and scholarly standards at the university.

Conclusion

Most of the factors that affected organizational commitment involved decisions and actions that were directly or indirectly at the disposal and control of the university management. These included: (1) acceptance of the criteria for the assessment of academic staff, (2) perception of opportunities for research, (3) satisfaction with the university management, (4) perception of the quality of the university management, (5) acceptance of academic restructuring, (6) adequacy of consultation by the management, and (7) contribution to policy making. The single most important factor that predicted commitment to the university was acceptance of the new criteria for the assessment of academic staff, followed by perception of opportunities for research.

The appraisal system (and assessment criteria) needs to be accepted and supported by its employees, otherwise it can become a source of extreme dissatisfaction when employees believe the system is biased, political or irrelevant (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). Perceptions of procedural and distributive fairness and employees' beliefs that they are being evaluated against what they are supposed to do on the job are significant factors in employee acceptance and satisfaction with performance appraisal and assessment criteria (Warokka et al., 2012). Perceptions of fairness imply that the organization is committed to its employees, which result in employees responding with commitment to the organization. Fair, transparent, and consistent performance evaluation measures lead to employee perceptions of organizational justice that result in trust between employees and the management, which makes employees develop a feeling of belongingness to the organization as well as loyalty and faithfulness to the organization (Neha and Himanshu, 2015). Belongingness goes hand in hand with inclusion and participation.

The management has to take into consideration, the perceptions of their employees when designing or modifying assessment criteria and the appraisal system (Warokka et al., 2012). They should put in mind that commitment is not only related to the fairness of performance appraisal exercises (Bhosale and Kumar, 2015), it is also positively related to employee involvement in the formulation of appraisal tools, clarity of purpose of performance appraisals to employees, and an appreciation of the relevance of evaluation criteria by

employees (Agyare et al., 2016). When academic employees perceive that they are not allowed authentic participation or not taken seriously, they tend to have negative dispositions towards the management (Sagie and Aycan, 2003).

Thus, before any performance appraisal system or new criteria for assessment of employees is introduced, it is prudent to determine employees' acceptance of or satisfaction with a new performance appraisal system or criteria for assessment of employees in order to promote employee commitment to, and its effectiveness within the organization (Salleh et al., 2013). While reforming very complex organizations such as universities is never easy, a key to success in achieving reform is building consensus and taking ownership of the change process, the way it was done by the University of Botswana in the 1990s (Ingalls, 1995).

Limitations of the study

This study is a snap shot of responses in a single period in time and not over a period of time. A longitudinal study would capture the effects of time on the type of responses given to questionnaire items. It is possible that the information collected from the questionnaires may not capture the complexity of respondents' perceptions of their jobs.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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