



Women-friendly human resource management practices and organisational commitment amongst female professionals

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Orientation: Despite the growing feminisation of the global labour market, discrimination against women in the workplace remains entrenched. Such discrimination of women is largely attributed to human resource management (HRM) policies and management practices, which are inherently masculine, designed by men for men.

Research purpose: The aim of this study was to explore the influence of human resource management practices on the organisational commitment amongst female professionals in Zimbabwe.

Motivation for the study: Notwithstanding the growing scholarly interest in the factors, which can help retain women in the workplace, there remains a paucity of studies from developing countries on how HRM practices influence female professionals' organisational commitment in the workplace. A dearth in the empirical literature is pronounced in Africa, particularly in a society such as Zimbabwe punctuated by patriarchy and an economy that has been depressed for over two decades.

Research design, approach and method: The study adopted a quantitative research approach and employed a cross-sectional survey of 210 female professionals employed in the private and public sectors in Zimbabwe. Structural equation modelling was employed for data analysis using AMOS 25.0.

Main findings: The results of the study revealed positive and significant relationships between women-friendly HR management practices and organisational commitment of female employees.

Practical/managerial implications: Premised on these findings, the study recommended that it is imperative for HR management to implement non-discriminatory reward systems, increase family-friendly policies, prioritise continuous training and charter clear progressive career development programmes for the female employees.

Contribution/value-add: This study provides managers with a better perspective of the predictors of organisational commitment amongst female professionals in an African context.

Keywords: HRM practices; organisational rewards; supervisory support; work-life support; organisational commitment.

Introduction and Background

Despite the growing feminisation of the global labour market, discrimination against women in the workplace remains entrenched. Such discrimination of women is largely attributed to human resource management (HRM) policies and practices, which are inherently masculine, designed by men for men (Ansari et al. 2016; International Labour Organisation (ILO) 2016; Stamarski & Song Hing 2015). Often such masculine HRM policies and practices are a source of great psychological and physical distress, mental and physical ill-health, job dissatisfaction, low organisational commitment and high turn-over rates amongst female employees (Borrel et al. 2010; Schmader, Johns & Forbes 2008). Although there has been a paradigm shift in societal roles where work is no longer genderised, a significant proportion of women professionals are opting out of their jobs because of the persistent gender inequality in labour markets (ILO 2016). In this regard, Lagarde and Ostry (2020) observed that despite some progress in the feminisation of the workplace, the participation rates of women remain low. As working women contribute significantly to household, national and global economic development, failure to develop women-friendly work practices such as fair remuneration practices will ultimately reverse all the accumulated gains resulting from increased women participation in the workplace (Stamarski & Song Hing 2015).

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Chepkemei et al. (2013) argues that including women in the formal labour market is inevitable in today's world as they are an invaluable organisational resource upon which a firm's competitiveness and sustainable growth can be built. In support, Loichinger and Cheng (2018) opines that women are a necessity in the workplace, especially in countries where there is a persistent problem of labour shrinkage because of the ageing population. To this end, this study contends that it is important to have a nuanced understanding of the drivers of the professional female employees' commitment in the workplace to allow firms to effectively retain their much-needed diverse skills.

Stamarski and Song Hing (2015) observed that the workplace remains unwelcoming for female employees because of the multiple forms of discrimination with respect to genderised wage gap, career opportunities and lack of women in leadership and management positions. Some of the most harmful gender inequalities experienced by women are enacted within the HRM practices (Ambad, Ramin & Harbi 2017; Bae & Yang 2017; Khuong & Chi 2017; Messner 2017; Qureshi et al. 2019). Whilst much of the literature focuses on the effects on firm performance of such management practices, the possible effects of these management practices on women in the workplace have received very little attention (Kato & Kodama 2017). The majority of studies undertaken to date have been predominantly masculine (Borrel et al. 2010; Qureshi et al. 2019) whilst others focus on both genders (Ikechukwu & Adolphus 2017; Nkhukhu-Orlando et al. 2019). However, to date, there exists scanty empirical literature that specifically focuses on HRM practises and female employees' organisational commitment. A few studies emerge mainly from the developed countries (Frederico 2015; Kato & Kodama 2017), and not so much in developing economies (Ambad et al. 2017). Empirical studies are essential to understand the drivers of women's organisational commitment in developing countries. Therefore, based on this deficiency of prior research, our study seeks to narrow this knowledge gap by explaining the causal linkage between HRM practices and female employees' affective, normative and continuance commitment (CC) within an African context, with specific reference to Zimbabwe. The ability to balance work and family indicates that because women typically maintain major responsibility for the home and the family, they have greater difficulty in balancing work and family than men (Duxbury & Higgins 1991; Sundaresan 2014). In terms of the work environment, Glick (2013) has observed that often women are given fewer and less challenging roles and fewer training opportunities, compared with men.

Consistent with literature, in this study HRM practices include fair rewards, supervisor support, opportunities for promotion, competence development programmes, empowerment, information sharing (Frederico 2015; Majid & Ibrahim 2017; Messner 2017). In their fairly recent study on the influence of organisational rewards (OR) on workplace trust and work engagement, Victor and Hoole (2017) found that OR are often used to enhance motivation or performance, attract and retain human capital, increase work engagement

and job satisfaction. Having investigated the relationship between supervisory support (SS) and career satisfaction in an earlier study, Wickramasinghe and Jayaweera (2010) concluded that SS, which entails providing challenging assignments and psychosocial functions such as counselling, friendship and acceptance, is crucial for the individual's career development. Good supervisory feedback and constructive communication between an employee and the supervisor enhance the opportunity to develop employee's capabilities (Van der Heijden et al. 2010). However, Kato and Kodama (2017) found that despite their good education levels, women are still less likely to enjoy similar career advancement, compared with men.

Notwithstanding the growing scholarly interest in the factors that can help retain women in the workplaces, there remains a paucity of studies in how HRM practices influence female professionals' organisational commitment in the workplace, particularly in a society such as Zimbabwe punctuated by patriarchy and an economy that has been depressed for over two decades. In her study, Makunike (2012) found that the problem in Zimbabwe is that women continue to be discriminated by their employers and male counterparts, often because of policies or practices that are ostensibly non-discriminatory. Gender discrimination is pervasive and is known to occur in almost every professional setting. To that end, Radu and Chekera (2014) observed in their report that gender discrimination is pervasive in almost every professional setting in Zimbabwe and that current mechanisms for dealing with gender discrimination are inadequate. However, none of the given studies paid attention to the determinants of organisational commitment amongst the female professionals in Zimbabwe. To the best of our knowledge, to date, only Jemedze's (2016) study attempted to do so although it was focused solely on the impact of a flexible maternity leave system – a derivative of the working conditions on Zimbabwean women employee's motivation, job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Thus, with the growing interest amongst scholars on genderised HR practices and on organisational commitment, empirical studies are needed to explore the influence of HRM practices on the organisational commitment amongst female professionals. Therefore, based on the deficiency of the prior research, this study attempts to enhance the understanding of the causal linkage between women-friendly HR management practices and the organisational commitment of female professionals from an African country's perspective.

Literature review

Theoretical framework

The study posits that the affective, normative and CC of female professionals in Zimbabwe is reliant on reciprocity and gender diversity at the workplace. Accordingly, the study is grounded on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Resource-Based View (RBV).

Social exchange theory

According to Blau (1964), SET is premised on a 'quid-pro-quo' – 'this for that' notion. Thus, the theory suggests it is more likely that a person (employee) will be committed towards those whom they share a reciprocal relationship (in this context, the female professional and supervisor). Empirical literature holds that the model is most appropriate for explaining organisational commitment (Ambad et al. 2017; Bae & Yang 2017; Blau 1964; Nazir et al. 2016). Studies show that HR management practices such as the provision of motivational rewards, supervisor support, permissive work environment and mentorship indicate to employees that the organisation wishes to enter into a social exchange with them. Consequently, this creates an influential psychological contract between the parties, leading to reciprocity in which case the employees pay back what they receive from the organisation through increased commitment towards the organisation. Based on the SET, this study proposes that the five HRM practices (attractive rewards, supervisor support, work-life support, conducive work environment and progressive career development opportunities) will be positively associated with affective commitment (AC), CC and normative commitment (NC) amongst female professionals in Zimbabwe.

Resource-based view

The RBV conceptualises diversity as a valuable, scarce and difficult to imitate resource (Ansari et al. 2016). According to Landman (2012), there exist various interpretations of the term diversity. For instance, Nkomo and Cox (1999) in Chigudu (2018:7) view diversity as broad, being all the differences that people have as individuals. According to Parvis (2003:37), diversity exists in every society and workplace and includes culture and ethnicity with differences located in physical abilities and/or qualities, languages, class, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and gender identity. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, USA n.d.) defines diversity in the work force as differences in gender, racial-ethnicity and age and emphasises that gender diversity is longer been an option but an inevitable feature of contemporary organisations. According to the RBV, a firm can gain a sustained competitive advantage by leveraging on its valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources (Barney 1991). Ansari et al. (2016) established that the globalised economy and the resulting heightened competition in the business sector have brought the importance of gender diversity to the fore. The more women join the formal workforce, the greater the workplace gender diversity for both the developed and developing economies (Ansari et al. 2016; Bae & Yang 2017). Therefore, premised on the RBV, this study argues that women professionals are a valuable resource because they bring about skills and qualities that are otherwise not available to drive business growth. The study further posits that there are no readily-available substitutes for professional women HR. The study also determines that workplace gender diversity provides a firm with a sustained competitive advantage and increased commitment.

Feminisation of the workplace

Feminisation refers to a shift in gender and sex roles in the society, group or organisation towards a focus upon the feminine gender (Chepkemei et al. 2013). Scholar and Douglas (2008) describe feminisation as the incorporation of women into groups or professions that were previously dominated by men. Concerted global efforts such as the sustainable development goals (SDGs), which amongst others seek redress of gender disparities, have led to changes in the composition of labour as more women join the ranks of the job market (Ambad et al. 2017; Bae & Yang 2017). In this regard, Chepkemei et al. (2013) observed that including women in the formal labour market is inevitable in today's world, considering that women comprise 50% of the global workforce. The study further concludes that female employees are a valuable organisational resource upon which a firm's competitiveness and sustainable growth can be built. Loichinger and Cheng (2018) hold the view that employing better-educated women in the workplace also comes handy in countries where there is a pressing problem of labour shrinkage because of the ageing population.

In cases where feminisation of the workforce seems to be progressive such as in global manufacturing firms, it is often associated with labour vulnerability resulting from the search for cheap labour and gendered beliefs, which serve the purpose of global capitalism (Hossain, Mathbor & Semenza 2013). In an effort to keep unit costs down, global manufacturing companies are under pressure to employ women with a view to substituting men's labour with cheaper female labour (Standing 1989). Yet, Ostry et al. (2018) argues that over and above the benefit resulting from simply having more diversified workers, women bring new and different skills, social norms, as well as differences in risk preference and response to incentives to the workplace. Ambe (2017) believes that feminisation of the workplace especially in influential positions is one way to introduce new ways of doing business and of delivering products and services and challenging old structures and business approaches. Chigudu (2018) views a diverse workforce as a reflection of a changing market world; diverse work teams bring much needed high-value research to organisations, create a competitive edge and increase productivity work productivity.

Organisational commitment

Currently, there are numerous definitions of the term organisational commitment in management literature. According to Khaliq, Naeem and Khalid (2016), organisational commitment refers to employees' loyalty to the organisation, their readiness to put exertion on the organisation's behalf, the level of coincidence of personal goals with the organisation and an aspiration to continue employment with the organisation. In another perspective, Khuong and Chi (2017) describes the organisational commitment as the employees' identification, emotional attachment and their strong desire to maintain membership towards the organisation. In contrast, Porter, Crampton and Smit (1976) defines organisational

commitment as the beliefs and feelings formed internally or as a set of intentions that enrich an employee's desire to remain with an organisation and to accept its major goals and values. Porter et al. (1976) identified three overarching features of organisational commitment: (1) belief in and acceptance of organisational goals, (2) willingness to put effort and (3) desire to continue to be the member of the organisation. The given definitions all point to an exchange of services between an organisation and its employees. In today's highly competitive environment, organisations worldwide are seeking to outperform their rivals by leveraging on their employees as a critical source of competitive advantage. However, to achieve this objective, an organisation requires highly committed employees (Lyndon & Rawat 2015; Messner 2017).

Highly committed employees strongly identify with the organisational goals and values, have an intense desire to belong to the organisation and are prepared to show greater affinity in organisational citizenship behaviour (Aksoy, Sengül & Yilmaz 2018; Majid & Ibrahim 2017). The studies also posit that organisational commitment motivates employees to go beyond their mandatory job descriptions. Committed employees deliver immense value to the organisation through their determination, pro-activeness, comparatively high productivity and an elevated awareness of quality (Khuong & Chi 2017; Messner 2017). Furthermore, highly committed employees display beneficial behaviours within an organisation whilst those with low commitment are detrimental to its survival and competitiveness (Saha 2016). Studies (Qureshi et al. 2019; Shah, Ali, Dahri, Brohi & Maher 2018) consider organisational commitment to be essential in predicting employees' attitude towards the organisation, aiding in understanding and forecasting employees' withdrawal tendencies such as lateness, absenteeism and turnover. In this regard, Lyndon and Rawat (2015) observed that organisational commitment assists management in harnessing voluntary cooperation within an organisation – it shows the strength of an individual's identification with the involvement in an organisation and also the willingness to remain in the organisation. Organisational commitment is a multi-dimensional concept with the widely accepted metric being Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model consisting of AC, CC and NC. These three categories of organisational commitment have been adopted in this study. Meyer and Allen (1991) described AC as a measure of the extent to which an individual feels emotionally attached to or identifies with an organisation. Normative commitment is a sense of obligation to the organisation depicting an employee's feeling of loyalty and duty (Messner 2013). Yao and Wang (2006) considered NC as the feeling that staying with the organisation is an employee's responsibility. Allen and Meyer (1991) described CC as an employee's extent of needing to stay with the organisation.

Human resource management practices

Human resources management (HRM) practices refer to the policies, decision making and their enactment within an

organisation (Stamarski & Song Hing 2015). The concept of organisational commitment has been investigated and empirically proven to be a consequence of HRM practices such as fair rewards, recognition, support and career development opportunities (Bae & Yang 2017; Khuong & Chi 2017; Lyndon & Rawat 2015; Majid & Ibrahim 2017; Saha 2016). In support, Zaitouni (2013) found that organisations that view employees as a valuable source of performance tend to strive to adopt HR management practices, which maximise their employees' commitment. The study further established that notwithstanding, organisations continue to encounter challenges in effectively managing and implementing HR management practices, which promote commitment amongst male and female employees. Similarly, Stamarski and Song Hing (2015) concluded that for women, some of the most detrimental workplace inequalities are enacted within HRM practices involving hiring, training, pay and promotion. Instead of a multiplicity of factors and guided by recent empirical literature (Majid & Ibrahim 2017; Messner 2017), the present study investigates the influence of the following five HR management practices on female employees' organisational commitment: organisational rewards, supervisory support, organisational support, working environment and career development opportunities.

Robbins and Judge (2017) classified OR into two categories: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic rewards consist of salaries, wages, bonuses, allowances, promotions, affiliation with peers and superiors, physical environment and the organisation's policies. The intrinsic rewards, also known as the motivating factors, include opportunities for self-development, appreciation and acknowledgement. Both types of OR stimulate the individual positive attitudes and encourage productivity. Supervisory support is an additional determinant of organisational commitment amongst employees and includes caring about subordinates, valuing their contributions, helping them on work-related issues and facilitating their skill development (Rafferty & Griffin 2004). Frederico (2015) concluded that a leader who shows great consideration for the subordinates' contributions, well-being, personal growth and development will be perceived as fair and in turn instils a greater sense of belonging and confidence.

Organisational support refers to the degree to which employees believe that the organisation acknowledges their contribution or effort and cares about their overall well-being (Ambad et al. 2017). Organisational support through family-friendly policies, which foster employee commitment and include practices such as working from home, generous maternity leave, child care leave, reduced work schedules, parental subsidy and on-site child care facilities (Bae & Yang 2017; Caillier 2016). Bae and Yang (2017) reported that women employees tend to be more emotional and sensitive compared with their male counterparts and thus require greater organisational support (OS) for work-life balance. They found that some organisations are inflexible in allowing their female employees to take some time off to care for their families. A few studies have established a positive relationship between a favourable working environment

(a reasonable work load, job safety and security, conditions, team work approach and flexible working hour schedules) and organisational commitment (Agbozo et al. 2017; Ahluwalia & Preet 2017; Aksoy et al. 2018; Suifan 2019). The provision of progressive career development opportunities is imperative for enhancing organisational commitment (Qureshi et al. 2019). Khaliq et al. (2016) concluded that HR's implementation of clear and fair promotion plans results in a solidified psychological contract, which makes it difficult for employees to leave.

Hypotheses development

The underlying proposition of this study is that in order to enhance organisational commitment, it is imperative that HR embraces female employees and implements women-friendly HRM policies and practices within organisations. Organisational commitment is threefold affective, continuance and normative. Owing to the scarcity of studies that specifically address the female employees' – organisational commitment nexus, our study assumes that the same determinants applied to the mixed gender or masculine studies are applicable to the female employees' organisational commitment research. The relationships between women-friendly HR management practices and organisational commitment are discussed here.

Organisational rewards and organisational commitment

Previous studies on the influence of HRM practices on organisational commitment reveal a causal relationship between attractive OR and organisational commitment (Ambad et al. 2017; Majid & Ibrahim 2017). Attractive OR relay to the employees that the organisation values investing in them (Khaliq et al. 2016; Nazir et al. 2016). In exchange, the rewards are found to instil a perception of support by the organisation in the minds of the employees, enhancing their commitment (Heathfield 2016). Furthermore, fairness in recognition and distribution of rewards signals out the organisation's concern over its employees increases the commitment of employees with the organisation (Ganesan, Mun & Raman 2017; Huynh 2015). Similarly, Bustamam, Teng and Abdullah (2014) posited that an employee who is satisfied with the rewards provided by an employer voluntarily reciprocates and continually shows a high level of commitment. Likewise, Nazir et al. (2016) concluded that an attractive rewards system enhances employees' commitment. The studies report that rewards (monetary and non-monetary) are the most prominent determinant for women employees' organisational commitment. In an earlier study, Miao et al. (2013) indicated a significant positive relationship between organisational benefits and both AC and NC. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are formed:

H_{1a}: Attractive organisational rewards are positively related to female employees' affective commitment (AC).

H_{1b}: Attractive organisational rewards are positively related to female employees' continuance commitment (CC).

Supervisory support and organisational commitment

Ambad et al. (2017) stated that employees are more committed towards an organisation if they receive a strong support from their superior. Employees with transformational superiors (supportive supervisors) also display fewer withdrawal behaviours and have a positive attitude towards work (Chand 2016; Ganesan et al. 2017; Satyendra 2015). Hence, supportive supervisors motivate their subordinates by emotionally connecting with them and creating a compelling vision and in turn the employees feel obligated to remain with the organisation. Similarly, other studies (Jackson, Meyer & Wang 2013; Nazir et al. 2016; Newman & Sheikh 2012a; 2012b) found that SS has a significant positive influence on both AC and NC. Hence, the following hypotheses are advanced:

H_{2a}: Supervisor support is positively related to female employees' affective commitment (AC).

H_{2b}: Supervisor support positively related to female employees' continuance commitment (CC).

H_{2c}: Supervisor support has a positive and significant relationship with female employees' commitment normative (NC).

Organisational support and organisational commitment

Ambad et al. (2017) also observed that the overlapping work-life responsibilities undertaken by most working women leaves them in an impasse – having to constantly juggle between life and career balance. Often times, the higher the conflict between work and family, the lower the work commitment of a female employee. Similarly, Mohamed and Ali (2016) found that emotional, moral and other tangible support from the organisation support has a positive and significant effect on organisational commitment. Therefore, the better the OS, the higher the AC, CC and NC of the employees because of their trust in and gratitude towards the employer (Ambad et al. 2016; Casimir et al. 2014). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are postulated:

H_{3a}: Organisational support has a positive and significant relationship with female employees' affective commitment (AC).

H_{3b}: Organisational support has a positive and significant relationship with female employees' continuance commitment (CC).

H_{3c}: Organisational support has a positive and significant relationship with female employees' normative commitment (NC).

Work environment and organisational commitment

This HR practice communicates trust on the part of organisation towards the employees, and this increases their loyalty and organisational committed. Newman and Sheikh (2012b) found that autonomy has a significant positive relationship with NC. In support of Khuong and Chi (2017), glass ceiling refers to the invisible or artificial barriers

instigated by gender differentiation, perceptions, stereotyping that stop women from progressing along corporate ladder to senior positions. They found that the more women employees believe they are being discriminated against, the less satisfied with their jobs they will feel, the less affectively committed they are likely to be and the stronger will be intention to leave the organisations. These studies lead therefore us to the following hypotheses:

H_{3a}: A favourable work environment has a positive and significant relationship with female employees' continuance commitment (CC).

H_{3b}: A favourable work environment has a positive and significant relationship with female employees' normative commitment (NC).

Career development opportunities and organisational commitment

In their study, Bashir and Choi (2015) found a significant positive association between training activities and organisational commitment. Similarly, Nazir et al. (2016) concluded that organisational commitment invokes a positive emotional response from employees, as well as increasing the opportunity costs to leave the organisation.

H₅: Career development opportunities have a positive and significant relationship with female employees' continuance commitment (CC).

Research methodology

A positivist paradigm was adopted for the study. The use of this research approach was dictated by the need for a quantitative, objective and scientific measurement of the effect of women-friendly management practices on employees' organisational commitment. A cross-sectional survey research design was employed in order to determine the nature of effect. A self-administered online survey questionnaire was designed to analyse the proposed effect of women-friendly managerial practices on organisational commitment. To ensure validity and reliability of the data collection instrument, the items used to operationalise the individual constructs were adapted from prior studies. The 25 questionnaire items on OR, SS, OS, WE and career development opportunities (CD), the five HRM practices, were adapted from recent literature (Ambad et al. 2017; Bae & Yang 2017; Majid & Ibrahim 2017; Messner 2017; Saha 2016). The 13 organisational commitment – affective (AC), continuance (CC) and normative (NC) – items were measured using questions from the widely accepted three-dimensional Organisational Commitment Questionnaire developed by Allen and Meyer (1991) mentioned earlier. The questionnaire employed for data collection comprised three sections: socio-economic (age, marital status, education, income, employment length and sector), HRM practices and organisational commitment. A five-point Likert scale was used for each of the 38 statements on management practices and organisational commitment, which range from 1 = 'Strongly Disagree', 2 = 'Disagree', 3 = 'Not Sure', 4 = 'Agree' and 5 = 'Strongly Agree'. In order to encourage ethical

compliance, the respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Respondents were further informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that if at any stage they feel the need to withdraw, they were free to do so. The data obtained from the cross-sectional survey were kept in a coded format avoiding use of names to ensure the respondents' confidentiality.

The target population in this study were female professionals from the private and public sectors in Zimbabwe. Theoretically, the population to be studied should comprise all female employees in Zimbabwe but access to privacy concerns, information, cost and time constraints and privacy concerns make it difficult to include all. Consequently, a non-probabilistic sampling procedure (convenience sampling) was utilised for data collection. The sampling method allowed quick and easy access to the targeted respondents and acquisition of data at a relatively low cost. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the questionnaire was posted online on various social media platforms for data collection between 05 April and 05 May 2020. A total of 294 female employees from various economic sectors responded to the online questionnaire. Consistent with Zhao (2016), in order to eliminate repeated answers, those responses with duplicate internet protocol (IP) addresses were deleted with the assistance from information systems experts. A total of 210 (71.43%) from the 294 questionnaires retrieved from the online survey were deemed usable for the study. The demographic characteristics of the female employee respondents are shown in Table 1.

The results in Table 1 show that 93.4% (196) of the respondents are aged between 18 and 45 years, whilst 65.2% are married. There is a high general literacy amongst the working women in Zimbabwe with 77% having graduate and postgraduate qualifications. In terms of employment, 67% of the women are from the public sector, whilst the remaining 33% work in the private sector. A total of 82% of the respondents have been employed within a particular organisation for between 6 years and 20 years and only 1.4% with over 21 years of work experience. The majority of the women (68%) earn a monthly income of up to Z\$5000.00 (Zimbabwean dollar) with only a small proportion (32%) earning above Z\$5000.00, indicating that many are in the low-income segment.

Data analysis

In line with prior studies (Ambad et al. 2017; Messner 2017), the covariance-based structural equation modelling (SEM) technique is employed in this study for data analysis. The SEM approach is selected because it offers a vigorous methodological technique to test the relationships between the variables under study (Kline 1998). Also, SEM is widely acknowledged for its multivariate procedures because it adopts a confirmatory as opposed to exploratory approach in analysing data and is therefore appropriate for inferential data analysis (Byrne 2013). Validation of the survey questionnaire was conducted through a confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 25 whilst the Pearson correlations between variables were determined using a path analysis.

TABLE 1: Respondents' demographics.

Demographics	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
18–30 years	52	24.8
31–35 years	81	38.6
36–45 years	63	30.0
46–55 years	9	4.3
56+ years	5	2.4
Marital status		
Single	70	33.3
Married	137	65.2
Other (divorced, widowed or separated)	3	1.4
Education		
Secondary School	12	5.7
High School	19	9.0
Certificate/Diploma	18	8.6
First Degree	98	46.7
Postgraduate	63	30.0
Employment sector		
Public sector	142	67.6
Private sector	68	32.4
Length of employment in organisation		
1–5 years	34	16.2
6–10 years	95	45.2
11–20 years	78	37.1
21+ years	3	1.4
Monthly income		
Z\$1.00 – \$2000.00	36	17.1
Z\$2001.00 – \$5000.00	107	51.0
Z\$5001.00+	67	31.9

Z\$, Zimbabwean dollar.

Assessment of the measurement model

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using AMOS 25.0 to validate the measurement items for both reliability and validity. Reliability is examined using the composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE) and Cronbach's alpha (α) for each construct. All constructs have Cronbach's α values greater than 0.7, a value that is regarded as the minimum threshold confirming reliability (Field 2009; Spiliotopoulou 2009). The study measured discriminant validity using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion, which is considered as the standard approach in assessing discriminant validity in covariance-based SEM (Shah & Goldstein 2006; Shook et al. 2004). Table 2 presents the results of the reliability and validity tests.

The results presented in Table 2 indicate the values of Cronbach's α range between 0.731 and 0.907, thereby confirming the reliability of item constructs, consistent with extant literature where the acceptable minimum threshold is 0.7 (Field 2009; Spiliotopoulou 2009). In line with Field (2009), convergent and discriminant validity are the two aspects examined for construct validity. Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommended that for constructs to be valid, all factor loadings and CR should be greater than 0.7 whilst the AVE exceed 0.5. Table 2 indicates an adequate convergent validity because all three conditions were satisfied. Ambad et al. (2017:6) described discriminant validity as 'the degree to which one construct differs from the others'. Table 3 reflects the results of inter-construct correlations and discriminant validity.

TABLE 2: Reliability and validity analysis.

Constructs and scale items	Standard loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Supervisor support				
SS1	0.855	-	-	-
SS2	0.793	-	-	-
SS3	0.836	-	-	-
Organisational rewards				
OR1	0.879	-	-	-
OR2	0.881	-	-	-
OR3	0.863	-	-	-
OR4	0.815	-	-	-
Organisational support				
OS1	0.896	-	-	-
OS2	0.874	-	-	-
OS3	0.972	-	-	-
OS4	0.911	-	-	-
Work environment				
WE1	0.857	-	-	-
WE2	0.703	-	-	-
WE3	0.769	-	-	-
WE4	0.781	-	-	-
Career development				
CD1	0.787	-	-	-
CD2	0.761	-	-	-
CD3	0.823	-	-	-
CD4	0.749	-	-	-
Affective commitment				
AC1	0.807	-	-	-
AC2	0.786	-	-	-
AC3	0.861	-	-	-
AC4	0.744	-	-	-
Continuance commitment				
CC1	0.941	-	-	-
CC2	0.872	-	-	-
CC3	0.820	-	-	-
CC4	0.796	-	-	-
Normative commitment				
NC1	0.801	-	-	-
NC2	0.868	-	-	-
NC3	0.759	-	-	-
NC4	0.847	-	-	-

CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted.

Table 3 indicates acceptable discriminant validity for the study as the all the square roots of AVEs exceeded cross-relations between the model constructs in their corresponding rows and columns.

Goodness of fit

The goodness of fit shows how well a model fits the data, and for this study, the χ^2 /degree of freedom (*df*), root mean residual (RMR), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and comparative fit index (CFI) measures were employed. Consistent with Ullman (2001), the χ^2/df for the study is less than 2 (1.948), indicating a fit. The RMSEA measure is below 0.08 (0.068), in line with Brown and Cudeck's (1993) recommendations. Furthermore, the CFI for the model is 0.971 and thus an acceptable model fit as it should be greater than 0.93 (Byrne 1994). In line with Hu and Bentler (1995), the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) for the study exceeds 0.9 (0.935). Therefore, this study concludes that the

TABLE 3: Inter-construct correlations and discriminant validity.

Variable	SS	OR	WFS	WE	CD	AC	CC	NC
Supervisor Support (SS)	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organisational Rewards (OR)	0.662	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Organisational Support (OS)	0.591	0.384	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
Work Environment (WE)	0.611	0.549	0.614	1.000	-	-	-	-
Career Development (CD)	0.469	0.471	0.492	0.618	1.000	-	-	-
Affective Commitment (AC)	0.586	0.463	0.501	0.222	0.283	1.000	-	-
Continuance Commitment (CC)	0.413	0.399	0.448	0.402	0.527	0.401	1.000	-
Normative Commitment (NC)	0.441	0.272	0.393	0.225	0.309	0.437	0.216	1.000

Note: Matrix diagonals in bold show the square root of average variance extracted (AVE) whilst the others indicate inter-construct correlations.

model fit to the data is acceptable. Hence, the study proceeded with path analysis and hypothesis testing.

Assessment of hypotheses

The results of the hypotheses are presented in Table 4.

The R^2 value is 0.641, suggesting that 64.1% of the variance in organisational commitment can be explained by OR, supervisor support, work-life support, work environment and career development opportunities. All of the hypotheses are found to be significant and supported. The most significant predictor of AC amongst women employees is OR ($\beta = 0.792, p < 0.05$), followed by OS ($\beta = 0.683, p < 0.05$) and SS ($\beta = 0.549, p < 0.05$). The results of the relationship between AC and OR in this study are in line with studies by Nazir et al. (2016) and Hadžiahmetović and Sait Dinç (2017) who found that extrinsic, social and intrinsic rewards were significantly related to affective normative commitment. Also, the results of this study corroborate the findings by Tayfun and Çatir (2014) who determined that OS has significant importance in increasing employees' AC.

The positive and significant relationship between SS and AC affirms earlier findings by Mohamed and Ali (2016). Looking at CC, the dominant predictor is OR ($\beta = 0.748, p < 0.05$), followed by career development ($\beta = 0.711, p < 0.05$), work environment ($\beta = 0.617, p < 0.05$), organisational support ($\beta = 0.531, p < 0.05$) and SS ($\beta = 0.410, p < 0.05$). Regarding career development, the results of the study are in line with a study by Çakmak-Otluoğlu (2012) who found that self-directed career management is positively related to CC. With regard to NC, work-life support ($\beta = 0.394, p < 0.05$) is the principal predictor, followed by SS ($\beta = 0.305, p < 0.05$). The positive and significant relationship between OS and NC from our study corroborate prior studies (Aksoy, Sengül & Yilmaz 2018; Ganesan et al. 2017; Onu, Akinlabi & Adegbola 2018; Qureshi et al. 2019; Suifan 2019).

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of women-friendly HR management practices on organisational

TABLE 4: Hypotheses and results.

Hypothesis	Predicted relationships	Standard path loadings	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Hypothesis test outcome
H _{1a}	Rewards → AC	0.792	15.260	0.02	Supported
H _{1b}	Rewards → CC	0.748	13.971	0.00	Supported
H _{2a}	Supervisor Support → AC	0.549	8.693	0.03	Supported
H _{2b}	Supervisor Support → CC	0.410	7.624	0.01	Supported
H _{2c}	Supervisor Support → NC	0.305	6.103	0.01	Supported
H _{3a}	Organisational Support → AC	0.683	13.059	0.03	Supported
H _{3b}	Organisational Support → CC	0.531	10.372	0.03	Supported
H _{3c}	Organisational Support → NC	0.394	6.813	0.04	Supported
H ₄	Work Environment → CC	0.617	12.597	0.00	Supported
H ₅	Career Development → CC	0.711	11.695	0.01	Supported

AC, Affective Commitment; CC, Continuance Commitment; NC, Normative Commitment.

commitment amongst female employees in Zimbabwe. Our research contributes to an essential, yet still sparse body of knowledge on the determinants of professional female employees' organisational commitment in developing countries. As hypothesised, this study found that OR, SS, work-life support, favourable working conditions and career development opportunities are positively and significantly related to organisational commitment as measured in the three forms: AC, CC and NC. Thus, improving company work policies through accelerated implementation of the women-friendly management practices within organisations enhances female employees' commitment and productivity. This study responds to the need for theory development and empirical work on female employees and organisational commitment in developing economies given that women are increasingly joining the workforce and contributing to the performance of organisations. The study is also useful in assisting policymakers, managers, researchers and other stakeholders to facilitate the provision of a conducive and supportive WE, specifically for the Zimbabwean women employees. The results of this study reveal that organisational commitment is multi-dimensional; each women-friendly management practice has a different effect on Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component organisational model – we found that the Zimbabwean professional women were more inclined towards AC in comparison to CC and NC.

It is essential for every organisation to ensure that they apply a consistent, non-discriminatory, motivational, expertise-based rewards system that retains female employees and enhances commitment. Moreover, there is need for more transformational supervisors who can support and inspire their female subordinates and ultimately foster increased organisational commitment. Furthermore, organisations need to invest more towards supporting women achieve a better work-life balance in the form of generous maternity and child care, child-care benefits and onsite nursery facilities. It is also necessary that management across organisations create a more inclusive WE through removal of glass ceilings and instead enhance fairness and gender equity in the

workplace as evidence suggests that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians (McKinsey 2015). Moreover, organisations should prioritise developmental opportunities for women in order to improve their skills, knowledge and capabilities that equip them for career growth and promotion prospects.

Notwithstanding its contribution, the study is not without its limitations. Whilst the results of the study cannot be generalised because of the use of a small sample size and non-probability sampling procedure, the findings are, however, invaluable in enhancing understanding of the influence of HRM practices on the organisational commitment of women professionals. Another limitation of this study is that by virtue of its quantitative nature, it has missed out on the social exchange and RBV related stories, narrations, experiences and insights of these women professionals who on a daily basis have to contend patriarchal and discriminatory workplaces practices and still perform their roles as wives and mothers at home. Consequently, our study can only infer from the positive and significant relationships between the OR, SS, OS, work environment and career development opportunities and the female professionals' organisational commitment. In the light of these limitations, it is suggested that future research can adopt a qualitative perspective, which seek to capture the experiences of these professional women and based on those experiences how they are re-imagining the workplace in the current Zimbabwe.

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Competing interests

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Authors' contributions

S.M. conceived of the presented idea and performed the computations. D.P. developed the theory and verified the analytical methods. S.M. and D.P. discussed the results and did the final write-up of the article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available because of restrictions (e.g. their containing

information that could compromise the privacy of research participants).

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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