

## THE EFFECTS OF DOWNSIZING ON EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT IN THE FREIGHT MANAGEMENT SERVICES IN ZIMBABWE

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### Abstract

*The 21st century introduced several technological advancements, including artificial intelligence, and these technologies affected almost every industry in every country. Freight management services in Zimbabwe had also adapted to these technologies to keep abreast with global pressures. Hence, embarking on massive workforce re-engineering strategies and downsizing had been the most popular strategy. However, organisations have to deal with consequences of downsizing, and employee commitment as one of these consequences.*

**Keywords:** *employee commitment, freight management, technological advancements, artificial intelligence*

**JEL Classification:** J21, J28

## Issue 3/2022

### Introduction

Organisational downsizing is not a new phenomenon, with scholars generating literature, arguments, and models in this regard over the years. Recently, downsizing has become one of the most adopted methods by organizations to stay competitive and save their businesses from total collapse (Sikayena, 2017). There seems to be a consensus on the causes of downsizing amongst both orthodox and contemporary scholars, with most of them pointing out that businesses need to deal with the effects of global economic pressures. The increase in gravity towards better-quality performance to counter fierce global competition clarifies reasons why companies downsize their businesses (Armstrong, 2008). Mapira (2014) contends that when organisations experience this harsh reality, they decrease their labour force to increase competitive advantage, whilst decreasing labour costs to expand production. Freight management service in Zimbabwe is not immune to these global pressures. Faced with harsh economic conditions, characterised by a lack of foreign direct investment (FDI), hyper-inflation, cash shortages, limited access to foreign currency, and a rapid technology change (artificial intelligence), more emphasis had been placed on freight management service's flexibility.

Zimbabwean freight services experienced a myriad of fiscal hardships, ranging from deficiency of foreign currency, hasty technological advancement, corporate reengineering, liquidity crunch, and global competition. Cascio (2010) argues that downsizing is frequently relied upon financial recessions as a reactive strategy, which became a trend across many sectors in Zimbabwe for more than a decade now.

### Problem Statement

Recessions affected almost all units and sectors across the economy, and for the past decade, a wave of economic hardships was a norm for Zimbabwe's business community, which adversely affected the country's working class. This putative hardship for the working class was reinforced by the earlier noted Supreme Court of Zimbabwe verdict in the well-known case of Nyamande and Anor v Zuva Petroleum (Pvt) Ltd. The judgement approved companies to terminate a contract of employment on notice for no-fault. The aftermath of the verdict saw the mass arbitrary sacking of employees based on the set precedent to terminate an employment contract on notice. Consequently, frenzied downsizing of organisations across all sectors in Zimbabwe became the order of the day, including the country's freight service sector.

The above research problem culminated in subsequent questions, which are presented below.

### **Research Questions**

The above research problem culminated in subsequent questions, which are presented below.

- What are the effects of downsizing on employees' commitment to the freight services industry in Zimbabwe?
- What are the implications of using the common law right as a downsizing strategy to terminate employment contracts on notice?
- How do employees perceive downsizing and commitment?

### **Research Objectives**

- To determine the effects of downsizing on employee commitment.
- To establish the implications of using the common law right as a downsizing strategy to terminate employment contracts on notice.
- To understand how employees perceive downsizing and commitment.

In line with the research questions and objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated.

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>1</sub>: Monetary causes of downsizing have a significant effect on employee commitment.

H<sub>2</sub>: Downsizing, as a change agent, has a significant effect on employee commitment.

### **Literature Review**

This is a bid to provide an in-depth understanding of the term downsizing, both orthodox and contemporary scholars have defined downsizing and its related terms. According to McKinley, Zhao and Rust (2000), downsizing means reducing the number of workers to optimal levels. The term downsizing can be used interchangeably with rightsizing. Cameron (1994) hypothesizes that downscaling displays an approach, which executives apply to reduce the size of their personnel. Winfield (2004) states that downsizing is a planned and organised decrease in the workforce to improve performance and flexibility, and to accomplish a strategy to maximise investors' income. However, there is no consensus among scholars on the consequences of downsizing. The Consequences of downsizing include negative

## Issue 3/2022

and positive changes in employee commitment, overall organisational performance, physical and psychological changes on both exiting and remaining employees, as well as perceived violations of the psychological contract. Redundancies culminate in a variety of undesirable psychological and physical well-being. However, some of the consequences of downsizing may be reduced with individuals who opt for voluntary exit packages (Casio, 2010). Casio (2010) reiterates that if the process is voluntary, it presents an element of choice and individual control of remedies to uncontrollable and unwanted actions that relate to both psychological and physical suffering. Downsizing has been widely used by organisations in Zimbabwe as an immediate response to economic crisis. As a matter of fact, downsizing has a direct impact on employment relations, including employee commitment. Theoretically, the current paper was anchored within Alicia and Ludwig's (1999) theoretical model of downsizing. The model provided the motives for downscaling, the effect of downsizing on workers' commitment, methods of communication, downsizing impacts on the psychological contract, and approaches to improve commitment throughout the downsizing process.

### **Theory Underpinning the Study: Downsizing and Commitment Model**

In their model, Alicia and Ludwig (1999) provided an exhaustive and thoughtful understanding of the psychological consequences that the lay-off procedures impact on the entity's welfare. The model demonstrated the consequences of layoffs on variations of worker commitment, variations in physical and emotional job harm (job stressors), and insights into the probability to continue with the job (job security). Alicia and Ludwig (1999) view job commitment as a required trait, opposing intention to quit, work effort, and fear of the unknown. The model also explained perceived fairness as a response of workers concerning how they view the execution of the whole downsizing process.

In their model, Alicia and Ludwig (1999) included job stressors that comprise role ambiguity, conflict, and role overload (Alicia and Ludwig, 1999). Ambiguity imitates uncertainty about opportunities and significances and diminishes the degree to which workers had control over their jobs (Mapira, 2014). Whereas role conflict and role overload emanate from job overlaps and staff shortages caused by downsizing. The above-mentioned variables, coupled with alleged fairness, are connected to fear of the unknown, referred to as the survivor syndrome in the model. Downsizing has increasingly become one of the most acceptable practices to cut down costs among organisations, hence the need for researchers to clearly understand downsizing. The next section discussed the research methodology.

### **Research Methodology**

To fully answer the research questions and to meet the research objectives this study adopted a mixed methods research approach. Specifically, an explanatory mixed method approach was adopted in conjunction with a pragmatic research paradigm (what works) in a bid to provide answers to the research problem. Data was sequentially collected in two phases, starting with (phase 1) quantitative data collection using questionnaires from 156 participants from 3 freight services organisations. After the quantitative phase, a follow-up qualitative data collection (phase 2) using semi-structured interviews were employed to solicit in-depth information from a purposive sample of 10 respondents. Numerical data obtained from phase 1 using questionnaires was analysed statistically by the means of descriptive and inferential statistics. A statistical data analysis software package, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27, was employed to analyse the numerical data. Data collected in the second phase (qualitative data) was analysed manually through content and thematic analysis. After data was analysed in both phases of the research, data integration was carefully done using a side-by-side colour-coded joint display to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of downsizing and employee commitment.

### **Results**

The data presented in this article was collected using an explanatory sequential mixed method approach (QUANT→qual) as alluded to earlier on. Quantitative data was analysed and presented first in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics. The targeted population to participate in the survey was 200 respondents from 3 freight services organisations. In total, 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 156 (n=156) were returned. This constitutes a 78% response rate. Subsequently, qualitative data was analysed using content and thematic analysis.

### **Demographic Frequency Distribution**

Illustrated below in Table 1, is the frequency distribution for the biographical questionnaire. The demographic variables of interest are gender, age, position and level of education.

Issue 3/2022

*Table 1 Demographic Frequency Distribution*

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Age (Years)</b>	18-30	11	7.1
	31-40	70	44.9
	41-50	48	30.8
	51-60	21	13.5
	Above 61	6	3.8
	<b>Total</b>		<b>156</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	107	68.6
	Female	49	31.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Job Level</b>	Management Level	29	18.6
	Shop Floor Level	127	81.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Educational Level</b>	GCEO'Levell	36	23.1
	GCE A'Level	47	30.1
	Diploma	41	26.3
	Degree	14	9.0
	Master's Degree	13	8.3
	PhD	5	3.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>156</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Author's fieldwork*

The frequency distribution shows that out of the total participants, the majority i.e., 70 (44.9%) were between the ages of 31-40, and participants above 60 years of age were 6 (3.8%), and they formed the minority of the total participants. Furthermore, Table 1 above shows that out of the entire participants, 107 were males (68.6%), forming a majority. At the same time, female participants were 49 (31.4%). This depicts that the investigated industry is male dominated. Moreover, the frequency distribution of the job levels or positions of the participants shows that out of the total participants, 29 (18.6%) were managerial employees and the majority (127), which constitutes 81.4% of the total participants, were shop floor level employees. In the same manner, the frequency distribution of the level of education of participants shows that out of the total participants (156), 83 (53.2%) had a General Certificate of Education either at Ordinary Level (GCE O'Level) or at Advanced Level (GCE A'Level) constituting the majority of participants. Participants with undergraduate diplomas, degrees, and postgraduate were 73 (46.7%).

### **Relationship between Downsizing and Employee Commitment**

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) was used to analyse if there exists a relationship or association between downsizing and employee commitment. Correlation is a measure of relationships and strength between two variables. It takes a value to -1 or 1 for a test to be significant in Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ). If the value of  $r$  is close to 1, it indicates a strong positive correlation. Whereas, when  $r$  is close to -1, it shows a strong negative correlation. For this article, two dimensions of downsizing were identified from the downsizing scale, and these are monetary causes of downsizing and downsizing as a change agent. The results presented below show the relationship between employee commitment and these two downsizing dimensions.

*Table 2 Correlations Between Downsizing and Employee Commitment*

Correlations				
		Monetary causes of downsizing	Downsizing as a Change Agent	Employee Commitment
Monetary causes of downsizing	Pearson Correlation	1	-.074	.381**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.361	.000
	N	156	156	156
Downsizing as a Change Agent	Pearson Correlation	-.074	1	.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.361		.929
	N	156	156	156
Employee Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.381**	.007	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.929	
	N	156	156	156

*Source: Author's fieldwork*

Table 2 above shows a significant and positive correlation between the monetary causes of downsizing and employee commitment ( $r = .381$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The assumption that there is a significant relationship between monetary causes of downsizing and employee commitment was supported. Inversely, no correlation was found between downsizing as a change agent and employee commitment ( $r = .007$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ).

### **Multiple Linear Regression and Hypothesis Testing**

Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to predict the strength of the relationship between the dependent variable (Employee Commitment) and the

independent variables (Downsizing as a Change Agent & Monetary Causes of Downsizing). The problem under investigation was to see if downsizing has any significant effects on employee commitment in the freight management services in Harare, Zimbabwe. In line with the research questions and objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated.

**Hypothesis**

H<sub>1</sub>: Monetary causes of downsizing have a significant effect on employee commitment.

H<sub>2</sub>: Downsizing, as a change agent, has a significant effect on employee commitment.

**Restating the hypotheses into null and alternate hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1**

H<sub>0</sub>: Monetary causes of downsizing have no significant effect on employee commitment.

H<sub>1</sub>: Monetary causes of downsizing have a significant effect on employee commitment.

**Hypothesis 2**

H<sub>0</sub>: Downsizing, as a change agent, has no significant effect on employee commitment.

H<sub>1</sub>: Downsizing, as a change agent, has a significant effect on employee commitment.

*Table 3 Multiple Linear Regression Summary and Hypothesis Testing*

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficients	R <sup>2</sup>	F	t-value	p-value	Assumption supported
H <sub>1</sub>	MCD→EC	.383	.146	13.092	5.116	.000	Yes
H <sub>2</sub>	DCA→EC	.035	.146	13.092	.473	.637	No

*Note. \*p < 0.01. MCD: Monetary Causes of Downsizing*

*DCA: Downsizing as a Change Agent*

*Source: Author's fieldwork*

Table 3 above shows a summary of the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

## Issue 3/2022

The hypotheses tested whether monetary causes of downsizing and downsizing as a change agent have significant effects on employee commitment. To test the hypotheses, the dependent variable (Employee Commitment) was regressed to predict the variables monetary causes of downsizing (MCD) and downsizing as a change agent (DCA). Sub Hypothesis 1, Monetary Causes of Downsizing significantly predicted employee commitment,  $F(2,153) = 13.092, p < 0.01$ . This indicates that monetary causes of downsizing have a significant effect on employee commitment ( $\beta = .383, p < 0.01$ ). These results clearly show the effects of monetary causes of downsizing on employee commitment. Moreover, the  $R^2 = .146$  depicts that the model explains approximately 15% change in employee commitment. Therefore, the null hypothesis of hypothesis 1 was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Inversely Downsizing as a Change Agent showed a non-significant effect on Employee Commitment,  $F(2,153) = 13.092, p > 0.01$ . This indicates that Downsizing as a Change Agent did not play a significant role and has no effect on Employee Commitment ( $\beta = .035, p > 0.01$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis of hypothesis 2 was accepted, and the alternative hypothesis was rejected.

### Qualitative Analysis

The results of the quantitative phase informed the interview questions. During the semi-structured interviews, respondents were asked about their perceptions on main causes of downsizing as well as to comment based on their views the effects of downsizing on employee commitment. Furthermore, respondents were also asked to comment regarding the termination of contracts on notice as a downsizing strategy. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the respondents. The majority of the participants singled out economic instability as the main cause of downsizing in Zimbabwe. One managerial participant reiterated how the organisation struggled to pay employees. In a quoted phrase, the participant exclaimed that:

*"...the organisation downsized due to financial upheavals. The organisation was no longer able to sustain its daily expenses including the payment of salaries to the employees due to the unstable rate of the country's currency"* (Tesla, senior management employee).

When asked about the effects of downsizing on employee commitment, the majority of the participants concurred that commitment was negatively affected during and after downsizing. However due to lack of alternative employment and scarcity of employment opportunities survivors had no option but to continue

working for a downsized firm to earn a salary and sustain their families. The following responses were the most popular from a majority of the participants. *"I no longer feel connected to the company. If I could find another job I can leave immediately"* (MacOS).

Interestingly, another participant vowed that he was still with the company only physically to earn a living but his mind was no longer there. This is illustrated in the quote below:

*"Physically I'm there working but my mind is no longer with the company. I'm only there to receive a salary so that I provide for my family"* (Zorin OS, a shopfloor level employee).

Zorin OS's expression above speaks volumes on how employees remained working with a downsized organisation without any sense of affection or attachment to it.

Commenting on the downsizing criteria, the majority of participants were of the view that termination of contracts on notice was a harsh criterion. Participants had the following to say: *"... of course, notices were given but then it was for only one month, not the usual three months that we know"* (MacOS).

### **Discussion of Findings**

This quantitative and qualitative results were integrated using a joint display and content narration. Meta-inferences of the integrated results are discussed in relation to the objectives of the study.

### **Effects of Downsizing on Employee Commitment**

Even though there seems to exist a disparity in the findings of the quantitative and qualitative strands, it was deduced through meta-inferences that the existence of Continuance Commitment was evident throughout the study. Quantitative findings indicated the existence of commitment after downsizing without clarifying the exact type of commitment. To demystify this ambiguity a follow-up was done through qualitative analysis, which indicated that employees continued to be with the downsized organisations because they had no alternative employment opportunities.

The above notion is consistent with Alicia and Ludwig's (1999) model of downsizing and commitment which posits that during financial crises, organizational downsizing will cause a shift from affective commitment to continuance commitment due to fear of financial loss and survivors' unemployability in other organizations. Simply put, employees were forced to remain

## Issue 3/2022

and continue with the downsized organisation owing to a lack of alternative opportunities and fear of losing their income.

Meta-inferences of the results suggest that employees are merely committed to the downsized organisations because they had no alternative employment elsewhere. Hence, they had no other option other than to continue with their organisations after downsizing. Relevant, reviewed literature acknowledges this type of commitment as continuance commitment (Alicia and Ludwig, 1999; Meyer and Allen, 2004; Allen and Meyer, 1997; Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). Research findings for the study's demographics (Table 1) indicate that a majority of the shop floor employees, comprising 81.4% of the total study population, did not have meaningful qualifications, which explains why they had limited opportunities for alternative employment. These findings are consistent with Allen and Meyer's (1997) argument that employees with fewer skills are the ones who fall into the category of continuance commitment because they fear that if they leave the organization, they are less likely to find employment elsewhere. Allen and Meyer (1997) assert that employees can choose to remain with an organization simply because they fear losing their earnings or savings, which leads to continuance commitment. Building on the work of Allen and Meyer (1997), Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) claim that employees who fall into the category of continuance commitment are regarded as 'perceived cost mindset', as their commitment is driven solely by financial gains. This assertion was undisputedly supported by the research findings of this article.

### **Implications of using the common law right as a downsizing strategy to terminate employment contracts on notice**

The second objective was to establish implications of terminating employment contracts by using the strategy of the employer's common law rights. The research findings confirmed the researcher's assumption that using the employer's common law rights to terminate employment contracts as a downsizing strategy, resulted in a frenzied downsizing process in Zimbabwe. This was also consistent with the available literature. In agreement with the findings, several scholars state that the judgement, which led to the use of employers' common law rights to terminate employment contracts on notice opened a new variety of downsizing in Zimbabwe, which left employees at the mercy of the employer through their implementation of a frenzied downsizing strategy (Makings, 2016; Kuwanza, 2017; Mucheche, 2017). Similarly, Kuwanza (2017) declares that the judgement opened a floodgate for job cuts across all sectors in Zimbabwe.

The research findings suggest that the downsizing strategy used by many organisations caused panic in employees who eventually lost trust in their organisations as they were not well informed about the downsizing criteria. This scenario negatively affected survivors' commitment as they feared for a second wave of downsizing. In support of this notion, the downsizing and commitment model by Alicia and Ludwig (1999) argued that survivors' perceptions of becoming victims of future downsizing led to high-stress levels and depression, which eventually leads to poor work performance. In the same vein, Matika et al (2017) were of the view that with a considerable amount of job insecurity, even a fair downsizing process would not convince survivors of continued employment. Intentions to leave were indicated by the participants in the research findings. However, scarcity of alternative opportunities was suggested as the main reason for employees to remain with the same organisations. Hence, the existence of continuance commitment.

### **Perceptions of employees with regards to downsizing and commitment**

The third research objective was to understand the perceptions of employees on downsizing and commitment. The research findings suggested that employees were of the view that downsizing was justified due to the economic hardships, which were faced by organisations. Almost every sector in Zimbabwe was hit by serious financial hardships characterised by acute cash shortages and a lack of foreign direct investment (FDI). These findings are consistent with the literature available on the topic under study. According to Matika (2017), hyperinflation coupled with a lack of investor confidence in the then government of Robert Mugabe affected industry and commerce in Zimbabwe, and this led many organisations across all sectors to downsize their workforce.

Conversely, results suggested that Downsizing as a Change Agent through the adoption of technological changes had no significant effects on employee commitment in the freight management services in Zimbabwe. The assumption that Downsizing as a Change Agent and the widespread need for organisations to adapt to new technologies have a contributory effect on downsizing and employee commitment was not supported by the result. This is not in agreement with contemporary views on the 4th Industrial Revolution literature. Johnston (2019) is of the view that organizations are mainly downsizing to cope with the demands of artificial intelligence and automation. However, in the Zimbabwean industrial context, this was not the case, as indicated by the results. Interestingly downsizing was reported to be mainly due to financial crises. This suggests that as the world

## Issue 3/2022

progresses into an era of artificial intelligence (AI) and internet of things (IoT), Zimbabwean organisations were faced with acute financial challenges, hence downsizing was not a result of the need to adapt to these technologies.

On the other hand, the research findings suggested that downsizing has remarkable effects on employee commitment. As alluded to earlier, there was little evidence to support the existence of affective and normative commitment in the research findings. The popular perception of employees on commitment indicated that downsizing negatively affected employee commitment. However, due to a lack of alternative opportunities, there were no better options for survivors than to continue with downsized organisations. This proves the existence of employee commitment. This scenario exacerbated some challenges related to the physiological and psychological effects of downsizing.

Both employers and employees reported having encountered challenges during and after the downsizing process. The challenges, which were rampantly reported are related to physiological and psychological effects of downsizing, which include workload, job insecurity/fear of the unknown, stress, and mental breakdown among other challenges. The results are in agreement with Akiyemi's (2018) assertion that survivors' perceptions of becoming victims of downsizing in the near future will lead to high-stress levels and depression, which eventually leads to poor work performance. To make matters worse, employees in Zimbabwe do not have any alternative job opportunities to help them to escape this scenario. The situation has forced employees to quit and stay as described by Cangemi (2000) who posits that employees can remain with an organisation physically but their minds will be elsewhere.

### **Limitations of the study**

The generalizability of the findings of this study is subject to certain limitations including lack of adequate responses, use of basic analysis techniques, researcher bias and time constrains. The scope of this study was limited to the freight management service sector in Zimbabwe. These should be thought out when generalizing and interpreting the research findings. The researcher targeted to collect data from more than 200 participants in its quantitative phase. Unfortunately, the present research managed to solicit data from 156 respondents in the quantitative phase due to limited access to data and a lack of response from the targeted participants. It is worth mentioning that data access was limited due to travel restrictions and limited access to company visits due to Covid-19. Therefore, the researcher struggled to gain access to participants as several organisations

declined permission and access citing covid-19 related issues. As alluded earlier on, this study was conducted amidst a global pandemic and a relatively huge amount of time was lost due to lockdowns and international travel restrictions. The researcher failed to timeously access data and this delayed the research progress, data collection at one point came to a complete halt. This might have slightly affected the research outcome. Notwithstanding the limited amount of time, this study offered valuable insights on the existence of continuance commitment and the untold challenges faced by employees of downsized freight management services organisations in Zimbabwe.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are worth pondering in order to improve sound employment relations within the freight management services in Zimbabwe.

#### **A need to avoid ‘termination on notice’ as a downsizing strategy**

Organisations that wish to downsize in the near future in Zimbabwe, especially freight and logistics organisations should endeavour to consider other downsizing strategies and alternatives. More than that, lawmakers and judiciary bodies should consider enacting robust and non-exploitative legislations to regulate downsizing as opposed to the use of employer’s common law rights to terminate contracts on notice for no-fault as a downsizing strategy. In a nutshell, downsizing using frenzied downsizing strategies should be avoided at all costs, and organisations in Zimbabwe should consider the use of strategies that are widely acceptable as well as paying out acceptable exit packages to mitigate the effects of downsizing on both exiting and remaining employees.

#### **Open communication and consultation should be considered**

It was deduced from the study that communication and consultation strategies should support planning and implementation of downsizing as it encourages employee involvement and provides clarity to employees’ prior, during, and after the downsizing process. Issues of job security and work changes were indicated in the findings and these were reported to be negatively affecting levels of commitment. It was therefore deduced that communication and consultations help to minimize the effects of downsizing on employee commitment. It is therefore recommended that organisations should consider the use of effective and credible

## Issue 3/2022

communication during downsizing as it cultivates trust and enthusiasm among employees.

There is a need to consider social support to both outgoing and remaining employees

The research findings suggest that apart from financial loss, downsizing causes both outgoing and remaining employees to suffer low levels of self-esteem, high levels of stress, and signs of depression as well as negative career attitudes. It was found that remaining employees usually suffer survivor syndrome, which is a combination of emotions triggered by fear of the unknown, anger, feelings of guilt, low morale, and intentions to leave. However, providing employees with social support services was identified as an important way to ameliorate the above-identified negative effects. In a nutshell, in order to avoid absenteeism, sabotage, and employee turnover, downsizing organisations should consider implementing social support as it helps to gain employees' trust and to deal with fears of uncertainty. This improves employee commitment and creates a feeling of organisational citizenship among the remaining employees.

### **Retraining of remaining employees should be considered**

The results suggest that while some employees are downsized the same amount of work remains, hence causing potential role overload and role ambiguity for remaining employees. As a result, intentions to leave due to employees' perceptions of role conflict were rampantly reported. However, retraining employees will reduce risks of role conflict and role ambiguity and assist employees with the transition to be able to assume new roles. With that in mind, remaining employees will be equipped with a diversity of knowledge and skills, which will enable them to multitask and use improved methods of production to avoid working overtime. Training will also assist the transition by helping employees to get prepared for challenging roles and eventually accept change.

### **Conclusion**

This article significantly concludes that there is a strong existence of continuance commitment among employees in the freight and logistics sector in Zimbabwe. Despite a frenzied downsizing exercise by organisations in Zimbabwe over the past decades, the reason behind the existence of continuance commitment was identified and understood to be exacerbated by a lack of alternative employment and fear of losing income by employees. It was further established that employees in the freight management sector endured untold physiological and

psychological breakdowns due to frenzied downsizing strategies employed by organisations in Zimbabwe. The existence of physiological and psychological breakdowns is an indication that downsizing has a negative effect on affective and normative commitment. Nevertheless, the present article capitalised on the benefits of Mixed Methods which helped to demystify the hidden truths behind the existence of continuous commitment in a downsizing organisation. This study may be relied upon by academics, lawmakers, and policymakers as a departure point in developing robust business and labour sensitive policies.

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### Issue 3/2022

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