

Attaining Organisational Success in Zimbabwe's State Universities: Perceptions of the Operational Staff

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Abstract

The researcher sought to establish the perceptions of operational staff on their understanding of organisational success. The perception of organisational success is usually a reflection of where the owner of the perception stands in the organisation. A constructivist philosophy was adopted to engage a group of purposefully selected operational staff members in in-depth interviews through a face-to-face mode and then by WhatsApp. The purposefully selected members of the operational staff were asked three questions, and they discussed these questions over a period of two months. At the end of the period, transcripts of the discussions were given to relevant members for their authenticity check and validation. Further to that process, the responses were coded, and themes were formulated from which the perceptions of operational staff were derived. The staff perceived that their hard work, the awards they received from the organisation and the achievement of the assigned targets meant that the organisation was succeeding. The recommendation was that operational staff members need to be involved in strategic planning sessions where organisational goals are derived and cascaded from the corporate level down to the operational level to make them understand the importance of hard work at each level and by every worker.

Keywords: Organisational success, strategic planning, and organisational performance

Introduction

Organisational success is a common concept used in the business arena to depict the practice where a company or organization achieves its strategic goals and/or vision. However, the concept of organisational success is difficult to pin down and declare that goals and vision were achieved. The problem is that there are many and varied measures used to measure the performance of an organisation, in most situations the measuring units may not be the best for the purpose. Traditionally, businesses used financial ratios to measure performance but there have been several changes in this area, the world could have come to realise that a healthy balance sheet or books that are in the black did not necessarily translate into success for the company or organisation.

Organizational success was born out of the process of an organisation formulating a strategy and producing a strategic plan whose primary focus was to address the following parameters.

1. Leaders set well-defined goals for employees and outlined ways to efficiently execute those goals.

2. Management implemented clear decision-making processes and communication pipelines.
3. Organisations carefully selected engaged employees who were fairly compensated and produced work that prioritized results.

The introduction of strategic planning in universities ushered in a whole new and unknown phenomenon; universities were conservative organisations that managed themselves and thrived on independence and favoured an ambience that did not readily accept the setting of institutional and individual goals that resulted in direct and close performance supervision, the supervision that determined one's salary or the payment of a bonus at the end of the academic year.

The major problem that arose from the adoption of strategic planning in universities was the introduction of performance management, which entailed the monitoring of individuals throughout the year that ended in each employee's performance appraisal and rating. This process subjected the university to a paced performance practice where the salary system was linked to what saw as subjective rating; a university employee may not produce tangible goods in a classroom situation. In a university system, the traditional financial ratios, which were used to measure an organisation's success did not suit the conducting of lectures and the preparation of lesson plans.

This study is aimed at establishing the perceptions of operational staff on organisational success in Zimbabwean state universities. Is it true that the closer one is to the corporate level of the organisation, the stronger is their perception of true organisational success?

Background to the study

Uhabakin and Titov (2020) say organisational success means a lot of things to a variety of organisations. For instance, some organisations take organisational success to mean they are profitable, employees are engaged, motivated and happy. Other organisations may take organisational success to mean their Chief Executive Officer was well-liked and recognised by many people, and some people could be forgiven to think it meant that the organisation was a sustainable institution.

According to Byrne (2011), another thought that many have is that an organisation that is successful is one where the traditional metric is used to determine the degree of success. That degree of success is illustrated by the magnitude of profit the company makes. This is the only measure of success that makes sense to shareholders whose only interest is the money that goes into their deep pockets. The long-term viability or sustainability of the company, its health or the value of each share is not important or ignored in measuring organisational success. Ever since scholars started to study business, the bottom line was the only measure of success the company or organisation considered and adopted each year (Byrne, 2011; Domínguez-Escrig et al., 2022; Pal & Torstensson, 2011).

The bottom line, or the measure of profit, does not feature where organisational success is discussed with reference to state universities. These are institutions founded on the principle of service to the citizenry (Maltz et al., 2002). They are non-profit making organisations and would never think of charging tuition fees that would result in a state university declaring and paying a dividend at the end of the academic year. This means that if state institutions decided to measure organisational success, they had to draft new measures. The other reason, and

maybe the most notable one, state universities do not have shareholders in the same league as companies. The state universities belong to the government, and a government is a group of professionals charged with the responsibility to manage public entities and utilities on behalf of the people (Almatrooshi et al., 2016; Listou, 2018). If this is the case, the state universities are collectively owned by the nation's citizens, who cannot charge themselves fees that would lead to surpluses that would be declared as dividends; financial metrics do not apply.

The question that begs an answer would be: What are the perceptions of operational staff on organisational success? What comes into their minds when they hear that an institution is successful?

The perceptions could reflect the operational staff's rejection of performance management and its offspring, the pursuit of organisational success. There could be divergent views on whether staff were happy with the strategic planning system that led to the appraisal and rating system. The appraisal and rating system is meant to improve organisational performance and organisational success.

According to Uhabakin & Titov, (2020), organizational success generally comes from having a clear plan or strategy to deliver on a mission. But a strategy is not successful until it delivers its intended value. Successful organizations create value. Organizations, of course, come in many shapes and sizes, flavours and colours.

Statement of the problem

The study was designed to identify a generic set of measure that organisations could use to determine whether any given organisation had achieved organisational success.

Research questions

Main question

Why was it necessary for organisations to measure the level of their success at the end of a performance period?

Subsidiary questions

1. How could organisations measure success?
2. Could the measure of success be similar at all levels of the organisation?

Almatrooshi et al., (2016) contend that organisational success is the stage at which an organisation achieves all the set goals and objectives, based on the needs of its stakeholders, comprised of internal and external people. The goals and objectives are the targets contained in the institution's strategic plan. This presupposes that before the exercise to determine the completion of goals and objectives, a strategic plan must be formulated and implemented in order to achieve the set targets, according to Green et al. (2006). The achievement of the goals and objectives could lead to the attainment of progress, growth and development of the organisation.

Maltz et al. (2002) say having a clear plan or strategy in place to accomplish an objective is typically what leads to organizational success. However, a strategy is not successful unless it achieves its goals. Successful businesses add value. Of course, organizations exist in a wide variety of forms, dimensions, tastes, and hues. A concise understanding of the term

'organisation' is critical here. Every human association that seeks to achieve a common goal takes the form of an organization.

The pattern of interactions between many people who are in close proximity to one another, working on various tasks, and relating to one another in the conscious, systematic formation and fulfilment of a shared goal is known as organization (Green et al., 2006).

The hierarchy of individuals within an organization reflects its fundamental importance. As a result, it makes distinctions between individuals and chooses who will be superior and who will be inferior. Every organization permits the unwritten rule that a subordinate cannot disobey a superior's directives (Palanisamy, 2005).

Process of organising

According to Almatrooshi et al. (2016); Palanisamy (2005); Safari et al. (2018), the following are the major components that constitute an organisation.

1. **Goals:** Each and every company needs goals. Therefore, before beginning any activity, every management must essentially outline the objectives.
2. **Activities:** Classifying various activities is a crucial step. A suitable division of the main activities is necessary if members of the groups are to effectively combine their efforts. Each job needs to be appropriately categorized and arranged.
3. **Duty:** Each person needs to have a certain duty. The operations should be divided up into different jobs and then assigned to the people so that they can carry them out efficiently. A specialized job should be assigned to each person based on their qualifications. Additionally, he might be given sufficient authority to carry out the task assigned to him.
4. **Relationship:** A large number of people work for an organization. Establishing the hierarchical structure of the organization's relationships is the management's responsibility.
5. **Integration:** Every activity group needs to be appropriately integrated. Through a horizontal, vertical, or lateral relationship of authority, for example, this can be accomplished.

Kauser and Shaw, (2004) define an organization as a group of people who cooperate, such as a firm, neighbourhood association, charity, or union. The term "organization" can be used to describe a person, a group, a company, or the process of creating or developing anything. It is a structure or a framework that describes how certain tasks are managed to accomplish a strategic goal. These activities involve rules, duties, and obligations. The information flow between corporate divisions is also governed by the organizational structure.

Byrne (2011) defines success as the successful conclusion of initiatives or activities; and the achievement of one's objectives. It is the achievement of wealth, status, accolades, or something similar. Success is a performance or accomplishment that is attained, such as receiving honours. Success is the creation of value, including economic and social advantages and outcomes that serve a purpose for the people they are designed to support, in accordance with a set of values that the organization upholds.

Value is frequently viewed in terms of the stakeholders involved, or the people, organizations, or groups with a direct interest in how a corporation conducts its business. These include the

company's shareholders, clients, vendors, workers, investors, and locals in the area where the business is based (Lee et al., 2017).

When these two concepts of 'organisation' and 'success' are joined together, the result is 'organisational success'; the achievement of one's objectives becomes the achievement of an organisation's objectives.

Do the operational functionaries in an organisation refer to organisational success and, if they do, is their organisational success the same as the organisational success of those at the corporate level of the same organisation?

Empirical studies

There has been several studies carried out by a variety of researchers to identify some generic measure of organisational success. Each of these studies considered success from identified parameters that defined what success was in a given situation. The concept of organisational success could be a function of an individual's perception of success.

The concept of organisational success

Díez-Martín et al. (2013); Domínguez-Escrig et al., (2022); and Lee et al., (2017) agree that a successful organisation is one that has a clear plan or strategy in place to accomplish an objective, it is typically what leads to organizational success. However, a strategy is not effective unless it generates the desired result. Successful businesses add value. Of course, organizations exist in a wide variety of forms, dimensions, tastes, and hues. Although businesses are the focus of this book, the same principles apply to all groups. Although each business will define success differently, all organizations must generate value in order to advance their missions.

While every organisation strives for organisational success, it is still difficult to define the concept and the measurability of the concept is unclear. The definitions of organisational success are as numerous as the number of organisations and metrics are equally numerous. Research indicates that employees within the same organisation may not view success from the same perspective (Jacks et al., 2011).

Appelbaum et al. (2017) are of the view that having a clear plan or strategy in place to accomplish an objective is typically what leads to organizational success. However, a strategy is not successful unless it achieves its goals. Successful businesses add value. Of course, organizations exist in a wide variety of forms, dimensions, tastes, and hues.

Several studies identify organisational success as emerging from the consistency with the organization's mission and values, its short-, medium- and long-term goals, its performance standards and culture, and its methodology and approach. The other consideration was to decide if the measure of success was dependable over time. Businesses that are successful are tenacious in their focus and pursuit of methodical execution (Appelbaum et al., 2017; Harr et al., 2019; Parish et al., 2008).

Numerous internal and external elements, as well as internal factors, influence organizational success. Structure, talent, and behaviour are the three main areas that must be optimized when it comes to the company's workforce. Similar to a three-legged stool, the organization becomes

less solid and less able to endure external forces if any one of these elements is missing. However, the road to organizational success is considerably simpler to travel when all three elements are completely developed and put into place (Akroush & Al-Mohammad, 2010).

1. The enablers of organisational success

According to Akroush & Al-Mohammad, (2010) and Pal & Torstensson, (2011), organisational success does not eventuate in a vacuum, it is worked for, but the environment must be conducive to the production of intended results. The environmental, and other, factors that should be able to enable the achievement of organisational success are discussed hereunder.

Structure. The correct positions in the correct roles

If the correct people aren't in the right roles or don't have the authority to carry out their roles properly, no matter how much talent you have in the organization, they won't be able to reach their full potential. The structure is needed in this situation. Every organization requires a unique structure, which is not always the case. Even similar businesses in the same sector may take different techniques, and each one may be successful. Two elements should be considered while deciding on organizational structure: alignment with the plan and provision of the necessary authority.

Hierarchies, both official and unofficial

Hierarchies, both formal and informal, define the structure of an organization. Relationships between CEOs, senior leaders, line managers, team leaders, and every employee inside an organization are referred to as official hierarchies. These connections are essential for expressing the organizational goal, the plan for accomplishing it, and for giving feedback on performance.

Clear discourse regarding structure

Organizations can operate more productively toward a single objective when their structures are clear. Every organization has a unique structure. Unofficial hierarchies give businesses with identical official structures a unique identity. Regardless of the constraints, the structure must be understood by everyone in the organization and communicated to them.

Strategic coordination

Don't rely on management theory or corporate history to determine who reports to whom. Always go back to the organization's main plan and check to see if the structure supports it. This strategy might lead to the creation of new divisions, team reorganizations, modifications to reporting structures, or other potentially controversial decisions. If your existing structure isn't helping you achieve your organization's goals, don't be scared to modify it; success depends on it.

Authority

Without authority, the structure does not completely enable people to carry out strategies. People need to be aware of their level and scope of authority. It can be difficult to give the correct amount of authority, though. Too much information can be cumbersome and lead to bad decisions, while too little might slow down development.

2. Talent: Competent people in the correct roles

Even with the ideal framework, the organisation may not succeed without talented individuals in each position. It's also crucial that individuals are in positions that allow them to function at their best (Simon et al., 2015).

Recognizing talent

The talent element of organizational performance is made up of the abilities and expertise that each employee contributes. Talent may be innate, but it can also be learned, moulded, improved, and developed. There is a certain amount of prospective talent in any company that should be taken into consideration in addition to the current stock of talent because it can be enhanced over time. This prospective talent gives a company a competitive edge and helps it survive over time.

Development of talent

The only way to realize this potential is to make an investment in it through training and development initiatives that encourage lifelong learning. To make sure that executives and managers have the abilities and knowledge to properly utilize the talent that is developing, this investment should also include leadership training. Learning the abilities required for each post as people advance up the organizational hierarchy is crucial; talent is required for structure to function properly. Every firm currently has a certain quantity of prospective talent at its disposal. The future success of the business depends on what you do with it.

3. Behaviour: Leaders, teams, and individuals interacting effectively

Diez-Martín et al. (2013) advise that for an organisation to regularly achieve organizational success, a strong structure with the right people in the right roles is still insufficient. Behaviour is the last component of the puzzle. The effectiveness of the organization as a whole depends on how those individuals engage with one another and carry out their specific responsibilities.

Developing and modifying behaviour

The objective is to have team and individual actions that are consistent with the organization's culture and vision. Every employee in the organization needs to be aware of the anticipated behaviours from them, and in many circumstances, training is necessary to teach new habits. The desirable behaviours must be coached and modelled by the leaders. It is impractical to expect any employee to make a change in the absence of these examples (Domínguez-Escrig et al., 2022).

Getting the balance right

Organizational cultures can range from those in which all employees have full decision-making authority to those in which only the top management makes decisions. The place an individual occupies in this spectrum of an organisation affects how its members act. Regardless of where your business falls on the spectrum, make sure people have the equipment they need to function there. Employees in an empowered culture, for instance, must possess the requisite skill set to think about and comprehend the effects of their actions. The bottom line is that when an

organization expects particular behaviours, it must give people the training they need to fulfil those expectations.

According to Maltz et al. (2002), markets, technologies, and people are all evolving quickly, which is a challenge for today's businesses. As many as four generations of workers make up the workforce, and each generation has a unique perspective on work, family, and project management. Strategic orientation, commercial priorities, and cultural values are the three main areas where organizations can succeed with innovation projects.

Strategic thinking

Businesses don't exist merely to be present. Instead, businesses exist to fulfill a certain need. Profitability and shareholder satisfaction are two aspects of the aim, but the reason for the company's existence is a much more comprehensive definition of their existence.

Priorities for business

An organization can prioritise business goals once it has a clear strategy in place. A company can prioritize new product development initiatives and concepts to lead with new technologies if it has a risk-accepting culture and a strategic goal to be the first to market (Maltz et al., 2002; Uhabakin & Titov, 2020). On the other hand, a business with a sizable market share that is less risk tolerant might choose to concentrate on incremental innovation. There may be minimal impact on the core business while implementing new technology at the periphery. To bring in more customers and boost sales, a hobby and craft store might add a smartphone application with a weekly coupon while keeping face-to-face 'classroom' instruction.

Societal/Cultural values

Last but not least, a project- or innovation-focused organization needs to have a consistent set of cultural values. Employers, suppliers, and other stakeholders are strongly influenced by the level of risk tolerance and company priorities. For instance, a company that prioritizes incremental market expansion will put manufacturing efficiency and cost management ahead of new technologies (Green et al., 2006). In contrast, a business that seeks for radical discoveries to cater to niche markets will use any methods necessary to develop a new product prototype.

Successful organizations for innovation

Bogacz-Wojtanowska et al. (2022) intimate that successful customer-centric innovation organization values culture highly. But a clear strategic goal and corporate priorities form the foundation of culture. Beyond profit, the strategy explains why a business exists. Strategy answers these questions: Who are the clients? What is the anticipated result? How will the existence of this company make the world a better place?

The selection of business priorities and projects is then made in accordance with this overall strategic vision. Companies that have a track record of innovation projects expand on their goals by increasing their market share and core competencies in well-known industries. They use fresh technology to help with the task. They also use commercialization of new products that fit with these strategic opportunities.

Human resource principles have been identified to influence the success of an organisation. According to Listou (2018), being receptive to change is the first step in creating a culture of an organisation. The requests for organizational flexibility may be found in important works like Gene Kim's The Unicorn Project. And in actual practice, one thing stands out after working with clients from all around the world to create true cultures of transformation, and that is the need for organisational flexibility. In addition, whatever technological or organizational objectives, people are at the core of any change. Agile organizations can more easily shift for new digital transformation initiatives or bigger business goals.

Own up to all initiatives.

Ownership can typically lack at the very top of an organisation, which is a prevalent characteristic of transition failures. In a world of constant change and innovation, transformation programmes do not proceed at the pace or depth required to produce verifiable results because a lack of leadership buy-in fosters a mindset that penetrates the entire organization.

Be specific about objectives.

Palanisamy (2005) contends that as long as organisational goals are clear, the results will only be as effective. It's crucial to quantify a distinct business value framework that serves as the North Star when undertaking a project like retiring a legacy data structure and deploying a new cloud data analytics replacement plan.

Organisations must start with a goal in mind and stay away from embracing trendy agile approaches without having a clear understanding of why they are needed; otherwise, the organisation goes in circles since explicit business goals weren't set.

Help managers understand organisational success by explaining it to them.

By spending the effort to initially describe the task to managers, the organisation may assist managers in communicating the vision that must be achieved to the rest of the organization. The organisation should not undervalue the part managers play in fostering buy-in and communication. The manager establishes a link between the project and its goal and the workers (Almatrooshi et al., 2016).

Managers frequently have the most interactions with hearts and minds. Managers oversee the largest budgets and are most familiar with the company's technological resources. They frequently offer a pragmatic perspective that balances what executives desire with the realities of running the business.

Join the dots between people and vision.

People can start to understand how the objective fits into their own professional trajectory when the purpose is clear and grounded. Employees anticipate enhancing their own value while contributing to the company's objectives.

Utilize feedback to adjust the course as needed.

The constant feedback loop is one of the most crucial agile principles. It's also for organizational development, therefore it's not simply for software development. Put feedback loops in place and take advantage of them at every point of contact between managers and leaders. Play them back to the organization to demonstrate what's working, what isn't, and how the organisation is making improvements all the time (Safari et al., 2018).

Young employees should be given the resources they require and a motivation to put forth their best effort, and then trust them to assume responsibilities and develop into their roles. The organisation should engage the youth frequently to confirm achievements and recognize them when they are made.

Investing in the workforce will hasten transformation.

Kauser & Shaw (2004) say that the transformation that so many firms desire can be sparked by applying the agile attitude to business operations. Set clear objectives first. The organisation should ensure ownership and buy-in to the overarching objectives, communicate these goals to teams and keep investing in them. When people establish organizations, they should continue to pay attention to themselves because the agility of the business depends on its people.

How to measure organisational success

According to Pal & Torstensson (2011), organisational success is measured using all types of measures and standards to achieve some modicum of the intended result to arrive at a result called organisational success. But do all members of the organisation, especially operational employees, relate to the intended result as organisational success?



Figure1. How to measure organisational success.

Qualitative measures of organisational success

Migdadi (2009) determines that if a company has succeeded, it's possible to include variables outside cold, hard facts in the consideration of success. Al-Haddad & Kotnour (2015) give five guidelines for measuring success that are more qualitative than quantitative:

1. **Level of creativity:** Set broad objectives related to your company's capacity for invention and creation. Consider whether your company consistently rolls out new initiatives and goods. Even while creativity can be difficult to measure, you can usually tell if your company is exhibiting the desired level of innovation.
2. **Customer satisfaction:** Generating happy customers is a sign that your business is striving for success. Every successful business must have a loyal customer base that will continue to use its products and services. When determining the likelihood that pleased consumers will refer your business to friends and family online, consider using more accurate measurements like an NPS (Net Promoter Score).
3. **Efficiency:** Create an impenetrable project management plan to achieve success through efficiency. You are more likely to feel satisfied with your company's overall performance the more easily and swiftly it achieves its goals.
4. **Employee satisfaction:** To enhance the experiences of your team members, use positive reinforcement in your performance management approach. In a similar vein, if you are an employee, consider what it would entail for you to succeed in your particular position given your particular personality. Success for the company shouldn't be incompatible with a healthy work-life balance and an engaging workplace environment.
5. **Personal satisfaction:** Regardless of whether you're a corporate executive or an employee who simply turned up for a day of gruelling work, gauging how you feel about your own achievement can serve as an excellent gauge of how you feel about the success of your company as a whole. It's a good sign for the business overall if everyone (or nearly everyone) at a company feels successful.

Quantitative indicators of success

Al-Haddad & Kotnour (2015), together with (Lee et al., 2017), use measures that are based on hard data that could be employed as concrete metrics to help identify organisational accomplishments. Here are five metrics for success that are quantitative:

1. **Customer retention:** To gauge the performance of a business, look at the sales statistics and see how many clients keep coming back. Given that business managers may access exact information on all of their existing and potential clients, this statistic performs particularly well for organizations that provide subscription services or online accounts.
2. **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).** To construct a key performance indicator, decide on a desired result that can be quantified. For instance, to gauge productivity, consider the actual time you or your staff spend executing activities.
3. **Market share:** To gauge your company's success, figure out what percentage of the market it controls. Create plans to boost that share through productivity, innovation, and business acquisition.
4. **Profitability:** Perhaps one of the definitions of company success that is used the most frequently is profitability. Look at the revenue your business generates, and more precisely, how much is left over after all necessary expenses have been paid. You may monitor both profitability and your return on investment (ROI).
5. **Turnover rate:** While it may be more difficult to gauge how satisfied your employees are with their jobs, you can check how many staff have come and gone during a specific time period. The aim is for strong employee retention and low employee turnover.

Financial statements of the company

Giorgi et al. (2017) state that the amount of revenue a business is producing when gauging its performance gives it a measure of success. Money is obviously vital when operating a business. Without it, an enterprise is finished. A company can be expanded and keep pursuing the entrepreneurial goal if there is continued monetary inflow. The amount of inflow measures the success of the company.

The income statement, balance sheet, and cash flow statement are the three primary financial statements that a firm can employ to measure organisational financial success. According to Appelbaum et al. (2017; Giorgi et al., (2017); and Jacks et al., (2011), there are a number of measure of success, some of which are listed below.

Customer contentment

Customer happiness is a key indicator of the success of an organisation. Where clients are not satisfied or happy with their purchase from a company, they probably won't return.

Customer satisfaction levels can be determined through numerous approaches, such as polls, reviews, or even a simple, and the "Did you find everything you were looking for?" question.

Number of new clients

A fantastic approach to evaluate the success of your company and forecast growth is to know how many new clients come in. A company that records a decline in new customers is not growing and not succeeding.

Conduct performance evaluations

Employees are necessary for running and expanding a firm; without them, it would be difficult to manage a business. Conducting performance evaluations to assess the performance of staff is one approach to gauge the success of an organization.

Performance evaluations enables a company to monitor both the level of job satisfaction and task efficiency of personnel. Employees may see what they need to improve via performance reports, which also provide the organisation with more information about their workload.

Keep up with the market trends.

An organisation needs to gauge its performance occasionally to be aware of the state of the market. If business is slow for it and for rivals, the reason could be a market slump.

Where the profitability of a company declines, management should not be depressed. It can be beyond its control and a result of the national market. If demand for the present product or service is placed on hold, decreased profitability might be a good opportunity to indicate a negative organisational success.

Expectations

The expectation of the organisation could be a measure for success; if the expectations are met then the organisation could be successful.

The expectation of the organisational leadership can also be a measure for the status of the organisation, whether it is successful or not (Díez-Martín et al., 2013).

Gap identification

The reviews undertaken in the empirical studies' section did not reveal some consensus as to what organisational success is to all organisations; individual organisations tend to define success in their peculiar situation.

Methodology

The constructivist philosophy guided the research; the need to find out what a group of people like an organisation's operational staff, called organisational success. The researcher sought to interrogate the perceptions of operational staff at state universities and learn what they called success at that level of the organisation's structure (Dawson, 2002; Qualitative, 2004).

According to Hunt et al. (2011), the case study design was adopted where each individual stood as a case in their own right and their individual perceptions were important. The researcher identified a number of cases at the operational level, who were selected purposefully based on the fact that they worked at the operational level and in proximity with each other where they shared meaning and insights on what they were doing. They could all have considered the role they played in the institution's greater scheme of things.

A total of ten participants were purposefully selected and their consensus was sought and secured. The purpose of the study was explained to them, and they were notified that they were free to withdraw their participation at any time. They were invited for in-depth interviews that allowed the interviewer to pursue a point until it was concluded. These interviews were both physical and telephonic; the initial meeting was physical to explain the nature, extent and content of the engagement and emphasize its importance. The subsequent interviews were carried out by cell phone and by WhatsApp and continued over a length of time. The WhatsApp interviews enabled the two parties to chat almost on a daily basis. At the end of the two months long interviews, the researcher produced a transcript for each participant that the participant used to authenticate the proceedings, their perception and to validate the information provided.

The authenticated transcripts were analysed through coding and breaking them into themes. The themes indicated what the participants perceived to be success. The authenticity of the themes was derived from the use of actual words and phrases used by the participants themselves; they were not coined by the researcher, who proceeded to give meaning to these themes and the meaning was the perceptions that the participants had of organisational success (Biddle & Schafft, 2015; Gunasekare, U.L.T.P, 2015; Hunt et al., 2011). The trustworthiness arose from the fact that these participants were bona fide workers in the functional or operational level of the institution.

Table 1. Participants individual particulars

No.	NAME	QUALIFICATION	AGE	POSITION	EXPERIENCE YEARS
1.	Paul Ndoro	MBA	56	Supervisor	26
2.	Margaret Chaumba	BSc, Acc	42	Supervisor - Assistant	22
3.	Nhamo Chiriseri	BA. Mgt.	46	Officer - Registrations	24
4.	Chritine Mano	BSc. Rec. Mgt.	51	Supervisor - Records	31
5.	Maina Tifire	MBA	39	Records - Assistant	19
6.	Andrew Magora	BBS	42	Officer - Recruitment	21
7.	Charles Chando	MEd.	38	Officer - Transport	18
8.	Constance Ruramai	BE. Curr. St.	56	Officer – Design	30
9.	Koma Kaitano	Dip. Ed.	53	Officer - Printing	28
10.	Aquiline Kondo	MBA	31	Supervisor - Assistant	16

The majority of participants are mature ladies and gentlemen whose perceptions were formed through years of work experience and shared employment values in the organisation. A few the participants could have transferred to their current organisation and positions from other organisations and through promotions, which route could have contributed to the formation of their current perceptions on what it means for an organisation to have achieved success.

No.	THEME	SUB-THEME	SOURCE
1.	Achievement	Individual assignment	WhatsApp in-depth interview
2.	Goal achievement	Objective setting	In-depth interview
3.	Award winning	Satisfactory performance	WhatsApp in-depth interview
4.	Good performance	No backlog	In-depth interview

Organisational success was perceived to be the achievement of a given assignment at the operational level. The individuals here got daily and weekly work assignments and whenever one completed their assignment, they had achieved something; the supervisors normally commented on the performance of those below them and there are employees who finish their work early. A participant, Constance, said: *I finish my work earlier, that is how the organisation succeeds.* The performance of the whole organisation is lost on the workers at this level, they are not aware of the institutional work.

A participant called Charles said: *When I finish my work satisfactorily, I know the organisation has succeeded; obviously the others also finish their work well. The workers at this level are the ones responsible for the work of the organisation, so if they finish the work on time, then the organisation succeeds.* The concept of collective responsibility tends to be downplayed by the concept of individual achievement. Aquiline supported the concept of achievement and



said, *We are achieving all the targets that the supervisor sets for us, meaning the organisation is achieving success. If a few people fail to do their work right, they are covered by us who finish.*

A few participants related organisational success to the achievement of the periodic goals that they set with their supervisors; it is not what the entirety of the organisation achieves. According to them, the entirety of accomplishment is reflected by the achievement of the individual. For instance, Christine said, *If I achieve my quarterly goals, then the institution succeeds. Why would the organisation not succeed when people like me, individuals, complete their goals set with their supervisor?* Andrew also pointed to the achievement of individual goals set each quarter as reflective of organisational success. He said, *When I set these goals with Supervisor and achieve them at the end of the quarter, would that not be the organisation achieving its success? I know that there are very less people who do not achieve the goals they are given, so the organisation is successful.*

The other perception of success is when there is what some called 'good performance. Koma and Aquiline concurred that good performance meant that the organisation is succeeding in whatever it sets out to do. Koma said, *I have seen many people working hard, not going for break or sometimes not going for lunch. This means that this good performance leads to the success of the organisations. We measure the success of the organisation with the good performance of the employees, not the performance of the management who watch over us.* Aquiline was equally vocal, she said, *I am convinced that the good performance of the workers here gives us the success of the organisation, otherwise the management would tell us that they are not happy with us. We are working even at lunch so that the good performance makes the organisation successful.*

Three participants were convinced that the winning of working awards by employees showed that the organisation is successful otherwise the awards would not be won. The management principals spend a lot of money on awards because they saw the contribution of the awards to organisational success. Charles argued that: *The awards we receive for outstanding performance show that we are making the organisation successful. If we did not win awards, like Peter who won the Worker of the Year, 2022, the organisation would go broke. Awards are a sign of success and the organisation give them to us to say, 'Thank you'. It would not thank us if it was not successful. Maina took the argument up and said, Our bosses know that if they want us to make the organisation successful, they give us awards and these awards make us work hard. Last year alone, I received two awards to prove that I work hard, and the organisation cannot fail to succeed, it succeeds! There are friends of mine who have received awards as well and they are hard workers, this is why I say awards are given because the organisation is successful when we receive awards.*

Although Margaret was not as forceful as the other two, she was convinced that the awards that are given are a sign of the organisation succeeding in the work that it does. She said, *I know what we are doing here is making the organisation successful. When we work hard and get awards it means the organisation is successful, otherwise it would not give us awards; these awards are money and material that cost a lot.*

Nhamo contented that good performance was shown by the awards that the workers are getting. These awards were testimony to the success of the organisation as no organisation would give its workers awards if the organisation was not successful. He said, *I am not a receiver of an award, but these awards show that the organisation is achieving its targets. If the organisation did not succeed it would be punishing the workers by not paying awards or good salaries, it*

would be blaming us to work hard. What I know is that the organisation sets targets by supervisors and when we achieve them then we are given awards because the organisation would be happy. The organisation is growing, it opened another office in Gweru this year to show that it is succeeding because if it did not succeed it would not open a big office and it would be telling us that it does not have money. We are also told that the good work that we are doing will be made known to the government so we may end up with a Minister coming to visit the organisation because of the hard work. If we did not work hard and the organisation did not succeed the organisation would not succeed.

These comments are indicative of the disparity between the organisational success concept that the workforce holds dear to its heart and what the management describes as success.

Results and Discussion

The perception of the success of an organisation that the operational staff has is one where:

1. Operational staff are awarded performance awards.
2. Operational staff achieve their quarterly targets.
3. Operational staff are told that their performance is good.
4. Operational staff are generally satisfied by their 'good performance'.

The perception of the operational staff is in concurrence with what Almatrooshi et al. (2016) say about workers in an organisation, about their achievement; workers perceive their individual and collective performance at their work station as representative of the performance of everyone in the organisation. The operational staff think that when they work hard and win awards that means the whole organisation is replicating their performance and it is the organisational performance. According to Palanisamy (2005), organisational staff believe that their performance at their station in the organisation is the performance of the whole organisation; where they perform well and win accolades then the whole organisation is doing the same. They do not realize the operational distance between themselves and the corporate level of the or

Conclusion and recommendations

Organisations need to engage their members in strategic planning processes and performance review sessions to enable them to realize that a successful performance of the organisation does not depend on the perceived performance of individual people. The operational staff must be involved in the goal setting process to enable them to appreciate the cascading nature of corporate goals.

The operational staff in any organisation are at the level where the tyre meets the tar and may not be involved in most organisational activities that conscientizes them to the interdependence of activities and organisational levels; how goals and objectives are cascaded from the corporate level down to the operational level and results are integrated upward from the operational level to the corporate level and the need for every individual to work hard for organisational success.

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